



5 THE WAY IN WHICH DISSERTATION WRITERS AND THEIR PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCE THE RESEARCHER–PRACTITIONER RELATIONSHIP

This chapter and the following chapter report in detail on the way in which the researcher–practitioner relationship is perceived and experienced by both the researcher and the original participants in five cases.

The distribution of these five cases was as follows:

- three student-researcher cases: one was chosen from each category classified in the document analysis in the previous chapter;
- two cases were chosen from experienced researchers from the same faculty;²³

One research project centred each case. For all cases, lengthy face-to-face interviews had been used as the main data collection method. In order to address possible selection bias on the part of the researchers (who could decide which original participants were to be included in my sample), I asked each researcher to provide at least two participants to whom I might gain access. The interviews usually started with the researcher, and were followed by the interviews with his/her participants, and usually concluded with a report back to the researcher with either another interview or certain follow-up questions which had emerged from the original participants' interviews.

On the basis of my theoretical framework, these two chapters were organised around the following three spheres of interest:

- The researcher/practitioner context (including aim of research; reasons for participation; understanding of beneficence²⁴ and responsibility towards each other);
- The researcher–practitioner relationship (including relationship prior to data collection; the engagement during the data collection period; post-data collection relationship, retreat from the field; and understanding/preference of continuity or closure);
- Evaluation of the relationship.

A comparison of the perceptions of the respective researcher and his/her participants was a common theme in all these cases descriptive, however, the selection of the different categories of these cases was also to

²³ Detail definition and sampling please see Chapter 7.

²⁴ Because of the unequal distribution of benefit discussed in Chapter 2 this issue of beneficence was addressed in terms of the benefit to the participants only. Since benefit could also be understood in terms of both an expected benefit and an experienced benefit this issue was investigated via both these avenues.



allow for other types of comparison: the cases of the student-researchers (dissertation writers) provided a further comparison between document (dissertations) and narratives; while the cases of the experienced researchers allowed for an examination of the way in which different power position (novice researcher versus experienced researcher) played a role in terms of the engagement between the researchers and their participants.

In accordance with the three categories formulated in Chapter 4, three cases are reported in this chapter. The detail sampling of the reasons why these three specific cases were chosen is presented in Chapter 7. As was mentioned in the research design in Chapter 1, these two chapters aim mainly at providing detailed descriptions, traces of the way in which the dialogue flowed and conclusions were drawn, while Chapter 7 presents a more detailed analysis.

5.1 Case 1 (category I):

Francis—Exploring facilitation skills in asset-based transdisciplinary teamwork (Masters)

Francis's project aimed at exploring the types of facilitation skills needed in asset-based transdisciplinary teamwork. Her study was situated with a broader course development (early childhood intervention) programme for an MSc degree (2004, p. 2). According to her, "because I got on board of this MSc project, my supervisor and I started speaking about it and (she) said, now you have these people here as part of the panel try to get the MSc going – use them for your own thesis now."

In this study, the focus group comprised the only data collection technique. Two sessions of the focus group were conducted, each lasted about one hour and each participant participated only once. These focus groups took place, as Francis recalls, "in the middle and towards the end of the MSc project... they were trying to wrap it up...it still went on about another year or two before they finalised, but that was just, I think, going back to reflect on the theme and refine things. But first to get the Masters' course going, it was maybe towards the end."

Francis was a Masters student at the time and was studying educational psychology. Her participants were mostly professionals – working in various fields including social work, education pathology, educational psychology, speech therapy, physiotherapy, occupation therapy, etc. Most of them were also lecturers

themselves and conducted their own research. Two of the original participants (Botha and Lee) were interviewed for this case. They were both lecturers in UP.

5.1.1 Researcher/practitioner context

The main aim of the study, as stated in the dissertation, was “to inform and enhance asset-based theory” (2004, p. 1). So “a contribution of this study could be a theoretical description of such skills” (2004, p. 3). “Indirectly, a practical contribution could also be possible, regarding the effective implementation of the facilitation skills” (2004, p. 4). As she explained in her interview this practical contribution, “was specially, for example, using it in the training, in service training of certain professions.” Her interview also revealed that she had never actually “never thought about publication. The only thing I thought of, that is why I even started off the project, was that it would be part of the module, for the Masters course. That for me was really big enough. I didn’t even see any thought of publication, because this is already a big thing.” As regards the practical contribution, when I probed further about whether it had ultimately been used in this module she answered, “the information I give, no, no...because actually it took so long for various reasons.”

In fact, “it took so long” was one important characteristic of this study. In practice this meant that she had started her study in 2001 when “I did most of the research, I did focus group interviews, and then there was a stretch”— almost two years when she was away as a result of certain personal issues and did not do anything about the study. Finally, it was in 2003 that she “put everything together”, wrote the dissertation and submitted in 2004. Interestingly, although she had never thought about publication, Francis claimed that, “my dissertations would have more of an impact if I quickly finish it and submit it in 2001 or 2002, because asset-based and transdisciplinary concept was still a fresh concept especially in South Africa, I think I would have made more an impression on the body of theory than I did years later”.

I raised the matter of the practical contribution at which Francis had aimed with Botha, one of her participants.

(If she had finished in 2002, do you think that would be used somehow in the module?²⁵) If that was not late, we

²⁵ Unless specified otherwise the questions in bracket in quotes represent my probes and questions. This applies to the whole report of all empirical cases. In other quotes I provide a longer record of the interactions for questions and responses between the participants and myself. On these occasions what I said was marked by starting with Y and what the participants said started with the first letter of their surnames.



probably would be able to use some of the information in the module, but the problem was that the module was already been written about that time when she finally finished.

So, according to Botha “it wasn’t formally part of the module”, but she did think that the focus group could have informally informed her teaching for that module. Indeed, for her, this had been one of her expectations when she had agreed to participate in the focus group.

My expectation regarding that was more to do with, it was nice to actually hear how my colleagues also see the process, what they get from it. And because I knew the other participants, it was actually a nice, can I say, closure of the whole project for me, because it was nice to hear how everybody else experienced it, the process...I knew the result from that discussion would probably be useful to my teaching purposes, because we were working on developing a new Master’s programme and using this construct from asset-base... the year after that, in 2002, we actually started implementing the module, so I knew that from the discussion, it would give me, because there were a lot of examples from the discussion, things like that, and I knew that I can use those examples again in teaching...So that was quite nice, because I could draw examples from other professionals.

Francis regarded interest in the research topic as the most likely reason motivating the involvement of the participants. “They had interest, otherwise they wouldn’t be part of the project to start off with.” This was confirmed by both her participants. However, both participants also mentioned other reasons that they regarded as important. For example, the referrer, according to Lee, was very important in her decision on whether or not to participate. In fact, she pointed to the importance of the reputation of the referrer immediately after I had raised the question of why she had agreed to participate. “Because in the busy academic schedule, one has to know, you know, it is not the referrer, it is which department you are, that when one actually wants to *help* somebody in research, but then it would be a worthwhile exercise” (emphasis added). She even ignored my suggestion following this statement of hers that “so indirectly it is because of the interest of the topic?” and continued “though the referrer is important, because if it would be from a department that doesn’t have a good reputation, or somebody that I wouldn’t know, I would think twice.”

Interestingly, the word *help*, as highlighted in Lee’s statement above, continued to surface not only in Francis’s own understanding of the reasons why her participants had participated, but also in my conversations with both her participants.

And I think because some of them, at least half of them, were lecturers as well as being professional people in practice, they were also researching, they had *that kind of understanding of empathy with me*, they knew that it is



a tit-tat, I mean I help you and you help me, *research is to help each other*. You know that is the only way that there is any progression...I know *they are doing it to help me*. (Francis)

It was the topic that I am familiar with, and I thought, you know, that I can contribute. So usually, *I shouldn't say favor, but* (so in a way you do think that you are helping her?) *I was helping her*, yes, yes. (Botha)

I think the benefit for me was, like in the case of you, to *assist somebody*, to be able to do research and develop as an academic. (Is it kind like a circle of me helping you, and you help somebody else?) Yes, also maybe some sort of social responsibility...I know how difficult sometimes it is to get participants, the whole thing about try to *help* somebody in academic (Lee, all emphasis added).

Probably because Francis had clearly acknowledged that her participants were helping her by agreeing to participate, she did not speak much about her understanding of other benefits that might accrue to her participants. For Botha, as was mentioned earlier, her expectation of the benefit was “to hear how everybody else experienced it, the process [of the module development]” and “that there were a lot of examples, and I knew that I can use those examples again in teaching”. “I wouldn't say that I participated the research because I anticipated these benefits for me, but in retrospect, I mean.”

B: to me, benefit was more in terms of, on the emotional, cognitive sort of level, understanding how other people really experienced the project. That was really the main benefit for me. And then I must say maybe there was some sort of benefit, as a researcher, to see how she conducted her focus group, how she achieved, how she did it.

Y: so you were also learning how she was conducting research?

B: yes, how she was facilitating the project, how she phased the questions, and how she grouped the people together. So yes, at a practical level.

Lee continued to perceive her participation in the light of to “assist somebody, to be able to do research and develop as an academic”, and went on to state that she did not think that any expectations of direct benefit arising from participation would be realistic.

L: not in expectation that I personally would be able to use any of the data.

Y: so whether you will be able to use the data or not is not very much a concern to you?

L: it wasn't there, no.

Y: what about the issue of benefit? You said that it was not a concern whether to be able to use the data or not, but in general, is this issue of benefit important to you?

L: It is unrealistic for any participants to think that there is a direct benefit in participating in research. I think the benefit for me was, like in the case of you, to assist somebody, to be able to do research and develop as a academic, so that is an indirect benefit, because I actually don't believe that there is, there is very few research that has any direct benefit to any participants.

Y: so from your side, you are giving more than you take?

L: yes, but I think that goes to most of the participants of research.

Although, in retrospect, she acknowledged a practical benefit similar to that revealed by Botha, “because



you know in the focus group, I could see what she was maybe not doing correctly, so I learn from that, be able to supervise my students, so I find that being very useful.”

As far as the responsibility of the researcher towards the participants was concerned, Francis’s main concern was confidentiality, “keeping my word [particularly in terms of the time required]” and “to give them information afterwards, once I had accumulated data and maybe come to some conclusions to give it back to them and tell them, this is what I got, do you agree with me.” Lee agreed with the view that reporting back is part as the researcher’s responsibility, “her responsibility lies in terms of ethical responsibility, in terms of reporting what we shared in an accurate and correct manner, and acknowledging participation.” While Botha also shared this view, she mentioned other dimensions that she regarded as equally important, such as the researcher’s portraying participants accurately and acknowledging the contributions of participants.

B: I do think that she had responsibility, in terms of portraying my view accurately, and not making implications or assumptions on the things that we didn’t say. And I also think that she has the responsibility not necessary protecting my identity, but protecting the information as such that we gave to her.

Y: in which sense?

B: that she couldn’t present this as her own work, that she need to give credibility to the group. And I also think the whole responsibility was also towards not only the individual that participated, but also the group because I think the group stimulated each other, and how we built on the things.

Since Francis had regarded confidentiality as extremely important, I specifically asked both her participants how they felt about the anonymity promise. Botha did not think that Francis’s anonymity promise “really matters” and she saw it as “just part of the research process”. Lee, on the other hand, did “prefer to be assigned a number or a letter or whatever”, and her reason for this preference was the following:

I consider a code to protect my identity to be an essential part of research ethics—the principle of beneficence—which means that your participants are protected...It is important to me not be identified as I have a high profile [being Head of Department] and do not want my views to be made known to all.

Interestingly, when I continued to question the importance of confidentiality, Francis further suggested that besides the professionalism she attached to the notion of confidentiality, she implemented it mainly to satisfy herself, not the participants. In fact, she was of the opinion that the participants would not have minded whether she had promised confidentiality or not:

To tell you the truth, I do not think that they would have minded that much, because a lot of them were fellow researchers, and because a lot of them work for the same university, they know each other, and a lot of us were from the same project, basically it was just getting together to chat about what we thought. I do not think it was



such a big thing to them, but it was still a big thing to me to let them know that I wouldn't use their names, that I wouldn't even use their initials, in the transcriptions, even though, you know I had tapes, audio tapes and video tapes, I didn't show them to anybody. I keep them totally to myself; I transcribed everything myself, nobody had access to that. So for me, it was important, but to tell you the truth, I do not think that it was that important to them. But it is important for me because as a researcher, I want to maintain that professionalism, they never told me to go ahead and use our names, they never said it, I never asked them. But it is important to me because I am not going to be presumptuous, just because I think they don't really mind confidentiality doesn't mean I am going to spread their names and everything. For me, it was important because I was there as a professional, I was there as a researcher, I had to stick to ethical considerations, for the sake of my dissertation as well...maybe put it this way, it is important, you only realise that something is important when it gets challenged and when you get problems. And I can presume that they wouldn't have a problem with confidentiality, and maybe even they would have said that we don't mind, you can use our names. But anything could happen, I can't figure something now that could jeopardise their reputation, anything like that, but anything could happen, somebody could take their name, could take what they say and turn it around... people can challenge me because I wrote it, but it is unfair to challenge them because I used them just to gain information, so it is unfair if they say something and somebody could take that out of context and twist it around, and challenge them and attack them because of what they said. They came with good intentions, they came to help me, and if there is any possibility that by revealing their names, they could be attacked, I wouldn't want that to happen. That would put me in a bad light. So just for the sake of me feeling ok about it and to protect them. Although honestly, I do not think anything they said would incriminate them in any way, but sometimes you even do not think things and things happens, things that you do not even expect to come your way, so rather just to protect yourself and protect other people.

As far as the responsibility of the participants towards the researcher was concerned, Francis's felt that "they have responsibility to be honest ... I expect them to be honest, to be open, to question me, to challenge me, to validate". While Botha agreed with this sentiment, both participants placed greater emphasis on the practical issues.

I think my responsibility is on a practical level, things like I said I would be there and I was there. And all those practical issues. And then I think the whole issue of truthfulness, to speak honestly, to speak openly, and to really get my best information that I could (Botha).

Because when she explained what her aim was and what participation means, even though we could withdraw , I did realise that I had the obligation later on to go through the transcripts and to validate and say I am ok with how she transcribed the text (Lee).

5.1.2 Researcher–practitioner relationship

As alluded to earlier, in this study "most participants were directly or indirectly involved in the above-mentioned project prior to this study (2004, p. 66) ... most were acquainted with each other to a greater or lesser degree" (2004, p. 69). Prior to the study Francis had known two or three of her participants



personally, although, for these two or three participants the relationship had been on a professional level, or as colleagues, but never personal. “The others I had met at the project, one or two I hadn’t met, but they had been referred by somebody else.” Both Botha and Lowe had met her at a conference prior to the focus group when Francis had presented the intention of her study.

“Adequate information on the goal and procedures of the investigation was given before the meeting (via email) and just before the onset of the interview ... Participants were contacted personally and/or telephonically and received invitations via electronic mail in which the purpose of the study was explicated. In addition to this, participants received a form stating the question to be discussed at the focus group interviews, as well as the assumed existing knowledge” (2004, p. 14, 66, original explanation). According to Francis, this contact was also to make her expectations clear to the participants, particularly the fact that she would want them to go through the transcript and validate it at a later stage. According to both her participants this early contact (prior to the focus group) had been important and they appreciated the fact that the researcher had made this effort. Botha revealed that she usually participated in a research study only if “I knew the person who was conducting the research [through some early communication]”, while Lee also broadened her preference for a good referrer to a similar preference that the researcher clarifies his/her expectations to the participants.

(So you think it is important to have some kind of contact before?) I think so, from a relationship point of view, yes. That you would like to meet somebody, either in person, or by email or telephonically...I think she was very clear, on her approaches and exactly what the expectations were, and I think that is very important to the participants.

Francis’s decision regarding involvement/detachment was closely linked with the data collection method used in her study. The use of a focus group for her topic (group interaction stimulates the range and depth of the discussions) and the nature of the participants (shared similar interests) were obvious. Upon the “recommendation from my supervisor, she told me that it was one of the things of the focus group, that the researchers shouldn’t be the facilitator, because they could come in, bias could come in...according to the rules of the focus group, my supervisor told me that well, I am actually not suppose to be facilitator”, thus an external facilitator was used to moderate her focus group. More specifically Francis described what happened as follows:

Because as a researcher, actually I was not supposed to be the facilitator, I have to get somebody else to be the



facilitator... That one person, because she was from the education psychology department, she volunteered to be the facilitator for the first round. And in the second one, it was also supposed to be another educational psychologist. For the first one, it did happen, and for the second one, the person was supposed to come couldn't make it in the last minute, so I had to take over that role.

I probed her perceptions about the role she thought she should have played and she gave the following answer:

Y: if your role was not to be the facilitator, what role were you supposed to be?

F: just as an observer.

Y: not talking?

F: I can talk, but I need to be very careful, I should rather be an observer, because I am coming in with certain bias, I came in with really certain presumptions, or certain ideas in my head, what are the skills that one needs, and by me asking questions, I could be influencing them, I could ask them, what you think about communication field, but then I already said it.

Y: you mean, by that, you are already offering a choice?

F: so that is why the second one, I didn't want to, but at that stage, I had to because the facilitator couldn't make it for the last minute.

She described her role as researcher in the first focus group and as facilitator in the second focus group as follows – her views were also confirmed by her participants' observation.

The first one, I hardly spoke. In the second one, I had to... though I wasn't completely quiet, even in the first one. In the first one, I was there present, I was sitting down, I spoke in the beginning to clarify the questions, and as they were speaking, and she was summarizing, and I wanted to dig into certain things, and then I posed my probes, I think once or twice, kind of throwing a stone and said, what about this, what do you think (Francis).

She was the facilitator...(so actually she did not participate in the discussion?) no, no, no. She got the conversation going and... you know she would ask us maybe to identify the theme, or request for clarification, but she was a facilitator, she didn't participate in the discussion (Lee).

She continued to elaborate on her understanding of the danger of bias when she drew a comparison between a focus group and a face-to-face interview:

Because I decided to use focus group interview, one of the things that I shouldn't be is to be the facilitator. It just cancels out bias. And even if you don't use a focus group interview, if you use a normal interview, you also have to be very careful, what you are saying and how you are saying it. Researcher's bias is even more a factor in this kind of technique than in a focus group interview.

In other words, she agreed that there had been limited involvement in her focus group and "there is a reason for it".



Both the researcher and her participants described their researcher–practitioner relationship as merely research-based. The friendship was understood more as friendliness, as Francis put it, but not one of the three thought that it had actually been necessary to involve friendship in the research situation.

So I think friendship in the sense of friendliness is important, but I do not think friendship is necessary (Francis).

I think when we spoke earlier about of having contact; I think that is important because that sets the theme for the relationship, and for the participants to be comfortable and to trust. And I think that is important, but I don't think there is a friendship element in it. It is just an interactive relationship and one of trust, so you feel comfortable to share. (Lee)

I don't really think it is that important to have the friendship there. (Botha)

Indeed, according to all three, friendship could be dangerous.

If I have this group people in the focus group now, it might have made a difference, because you tend to be friend with people who think the same way as you did, and that is dangerous, because then basically you are going to get people to say what you want them to say...It could be dangerous to the research because like-minded people become friends and you need challenging minds in research. You really need people challenging and criticizing you... (Why do you think friends can't challenge each other?) They can challenge each other, but sometimes unconsciously, they will say things in certain ways to please the other person. (Does that have to happen?) It is not necessary, I didn't say that it is necessary, what I was saying is that if you try to get people open and sincere opinion and if they are very good friends, then they might be reluctant to be as open with you. I am not saying that they are not open to each other, but especially when it comes to something when they know it is going to affect your career, it is going to affect your study, or you believe in this kind of way or thinking, and they would be worried if they challenge you, then they might offend you, or they might cause problems to the research, they might rather keep quiet. I am not saying that they do this intentionally, but unconsciously, at subconscious level. (What about the other side? if we talk about people, let's say strangers, do you think there is also a possibility that people would not be so open because they want to be polite with strangers?) There is a possibility, but I think the possibility is less, because number one, especially if you tell them from the beginning that their name is confidential, and number two, they know that there is a very slim chance that they will ever meet you again or come across you, that's why sometimes people open up about their personal life, very deep things, to complete strangers, but they struggle sometimes tell their families. (Francis).

Friendship could cloud the issue, because it could be a variable, because you might not give the same answer, because with the friendship, you would want to please somebody, and with the distant relationship, you would be more just to say your truth thinking (Lee).

And sometimes, if there is a friendship issue, I think it also can influence the research, because then you might, it might not come to the forefront, but you might try to please the researcher. (Botha)

As mentioned earlier, there had been a time lag during which Francis had not attended to the results of the



focus groups discussions. However, when she did return to continue with the dissertation, she identified the themes that had emerged from the discussion, and then “I emailed them and I said, look, it has been a long time, I hope you still remember me, this is what I got, what do you think”, “This was however, for the purposes of verification and adaptation” (2004, p. 15). And then “the people that I was able to get hold of, all of them came back very positively, saying of course we remembered you, we remember the interview, thank you for this great thing and what about this and what about that...I got at least three or four people coming back to me, saying, really putting a lot of time to all the notes that I have made and saying, this is good, this is great, what about that, remember this, I wouldn’t put these two together in the category... how about this category, putting this and this heading rather than that heading...”

(Do you think they live up to your expectation?) Yes, their willingness, that is one of the things that I like it a lot, a lot of them were willing to give me feedbacks, even after years later...I think, they really took effort. Not all participants would just sit down and spend a lot of time going through notes, highlighting this and that. It was more than what I expected actually.

This feedback process was also appreciated by both participants.

What I really appreciated was afterwards that she made contacts again and said you know this is how I analysed the data, and if this was your intentions and so on. (So this is important to you?) Yes. Because I don’t want, yes I participated and in the end, I don’t know what happen to it...the analysis, that was quite good for me, then you could see and then also remember oh yes, this is the way that I used, this was exactly what I meant, so that was nice... The analysis part, it was nice, and interesting as well, to see what she did with the information and how she grouped it, so I spent more time on analysis part. (And you liked it?) Yes. I was also a researcher, so it was interesting to see what she did. (Botha).

(She said that she shared with you the transcript and also asked you to validate, so you think it is important to do that?) I think so, like I mentioned earlier, I felt comfortable because I was trusting her, but it was nice to be able to review and to make sure that she hadn’t taken done anything that I hadn’t said, so it is a nice control (Lee).

During the period between the focus group and the sending of the transcript, “for most of them, there was no contact. For about three of them there was still contact, not necessary pertaining to this project, I happened to see them or whatever reason we had contact, but never really about those.”

According to Francis, some kind of a relationship had developed since her study,

If I were to meet them somewhere, they would ask me about my personal life and how I was doing...with one or two, or three of them, I would be able to have conversations about anything else, and maybe about how their families are doing, even though at the stage of the project, I didn’t know them. Over the last two years, I came to know them better...at that stage, even the people that I knew the closest, they were still my superiors, so I still



had this kind of distance with them, even though they were friendly to me. But over the few years, things have changed, especially with two of them, I am coming to them more at a personal level, maybe because I was also qualified, professionally speaking, I was in the same level as they do.

However, the relationship she described above was with other participants, but not with the two whom I had interviewed. For those two, it was the focus group, the thanks email after the focus group, the transcript and “that was it.”

So did the two participants and also the researcher prefer the way in which the research–practitioner relationship had ended after the study had been completed? Or would they have preferred some kind of continuity? I posed these questions to all three. According to Francis

F: in this case, it’s better to have a closure because it was a focus group interview, focus group means that you investigate one thing, quite intensively, and that’s it. So it is not a long-term thing, that you had to go and see how they are doing in two years or three years time. So I would think that closure is better for what I needed for a Masters. But if I were doing a bigger project, like a Doctor, I would use this to create a programme to train other facilitators of transdisciplinary, then I would say maybe continuity is good because then you can go back to them and say five year ago, you said this and this, and this were important, now you have five years of experience, in the transdisciplinary group, what can you tell me and what can you teach me, and I could apply that in my training programme. But for my need, closure was the main thing...In this case, it was closure, even though my actual writing of the dissertation hasn’t finished, there was closure on what they had to do, until after I have given them the feedback and asked them for their opinion.

Y: what do you think of what the participants might want?

F: I didn’t think about what they wanted because right in the beginning, I think I made the intention clear that I need you to give me opinions on this. No, it’s true that I didn’t think about maybe what they needed. As I said, most of them know each other, and they were involved with each other even though they were coming from different discipline, because a lot of them were from the university. So I think in that sense, there is probably still communication between them, if they were to discuss anything about this project or their experience about transdisciplinary or whatever, they probably would have shared it anyway. But no, I didn’t think about what they would need, that’s true...

Lee agreed that closure was what she preferred, at least for this case.

Y: So is it fine to have a formal closure or you prefer to let it continue in any way?

L: I think it depends on the type of the research and what importance is that to the researcher. Because I am in a totally different field, so yes, she was on the early child intervention project, but my role was to teach two modules in that project, so I wasn’t extremely concerned about her findings. I am not into educational psychology, I wouldn’t had the time, what I would have liked was a abstract, yes, but I wouldn’t want to continue the relationship because there wasn’t enough point of it unless if you are in the same field.

Y: what about for example, if she just drop by or say hello, how are you?

L: no, I wouldn’t want to, because one is busy, then there was no reason that I would want to become a friend, for instance, and then there is closure, because I think if you are a busy person, it is important to have closure on stuff. So why would you, from my opinion, I wouldn’t want to drag something out. It is fine. I think she also set



the perimeters, because from the beginning, we were very clear about what my role had to be, what the expectations were, and then finished.

Botha thought slightly differently.

Y: So do you think it is necessary or important to keep some kind of contact afterwards?

B: some sort of relationship is actually nice, yes,

Y: what kind of relationship?

B: I think email once in a blue moon, to just say you know this is what I have been up to now, or if you publish anything after that, just said you know, this was the newest stuff that I have been busy with or whatever, something like that would be nice. If it is a topic, particularly if it is the topic that interests you, I mean that was why we participated in the initial research. I am not talking about other studies that you do on the street. But if you selected specifically, obviously you do share some sorts of interest.

Y: do you think it is necessary to have a kind of closure when a research is finished or you want to continue in some way?

B: the continuation was nice, like I said, if there are certain things you write afterwards or just to say I have done this and send that email. But for a specific project, it's also quite nice if there is formal closure, I think. Just say thank you, I submitted the thesis and blah blah, so that you know. In a sense you need closure but you also need the continuity as well.

5.1.3 Evaluation of the relationship

All three viewed the researcher–practitioner relationship as positive.

(How do you find them? You said they lived up to your expectations?) Yes, even more than what I expected. (So, in general, you think it was good?) Oh yes, very positive. Even those people who criticise or challenge some of the things that I did [in the analysis], I appreciate that, because actually I did change some of the things we wrote in the dissertation, because of what they said, so even then, I appreciated it. (Francis)

(So how in general you experienced the engagement?) I must say that it had been a while back, I can't quite clearly remember. (Ok, let's say good or bad?) It was good. It was good... (So how in general you find her as a researcher?) I think it was a positive experience. I think she was down to the point, there was no any un-clarity... so I think it was good. (Botha)

(How in general you experienced the focus group, the engagement?) It is long ago, but I didn't have negative experiences, otherwise I would have remembered it. It was stimulating...(Can I in general say that the relationship was good?) yes, it was very professional. (Lee)

In fact, this positive experience had contributed, according to Botha, to her agreeing to participate in my research.

(So let's assume that she approach you for another study, you might consider?) Yes, definitely, that was also why when she was approaching me to say that you are actually following up on her research, I immediately said I will be willing to participate again, because I thought that if everything was hassle free again, like the first time,



it would be ok.

5.2 Case 2 (category II):

Thabo –The influence of Cross-cultural interviewing on the generation of data (Masters)

De Beer—The academic self-concept of learners with hearing impairment in two South African public school contexts: Special and full-service inclusion schools (PhD)

This case was chosen because of Thabo's study. Although I had understood before choosing his study that it had been based on another study, it was only after I had started inquiring more closely into the details, that I found it difficult to describe his study fully without bringing in the study on which it had been built – the PhD study conducted by De Beer.

The focus of De Beer's research was to "understand the academic self concept (ASC) of grade 7 learners with hearing impairments (HI) in different school contexts" (2005, p. 5). The methodology she used was a combination of quantitative tools such as questionnaires (ASC questionnaires) and qualitative tools such as classroom observations and interviews with the principals, educators and learners with HI (2005, p. summary).

De Beer was white, female, and Afrikaans speaking, while Thabo was black, male, and Sepedi²⁶ speaking. Since some of the schools De Beer had included in her sampling used Sepedi as the medium of instruction and since she did not understand Sepedi, Thabo's involvement in the study, initially at least, was "to help her. It was only to help her" – helping in the sense of administering the questionnaire, translating and acting as an extra observer and interviewer, particularly "with observations and explanation of the classroom interactions" (De Beer, 2005, p. 99), using the knowledge of the cultural clues.

However, during De Beer's study, Thabo "realised the difference in interaction between me and the information that is happening and the interaction that was happening with her", and this difference, according to him, prompted his decision to embark upon his own research topic "to ascertain whether new and/or more information (or clarification) could be elicited in the absence of the cultural dimensions represented by interviewer A and whether the information elicited would differ from the information

²⁶ Both Afrikaans and Sepedi are local languages spoken in South Africa.

generated from the session one interview in aspects such as volume, range, expressions, content and formulation of content and possibly influenced by the dimensions of culture focused on in this study” (2004, p. 55, original explanation).

The roles of Thabo and De Beer in the study, particularly in the interview and observation sessions, are illustrated figure 4, which was adapted from what Thabo had described in his dissertation. Interviewer A in the figure represents De Beer and interviewer B Thabo.

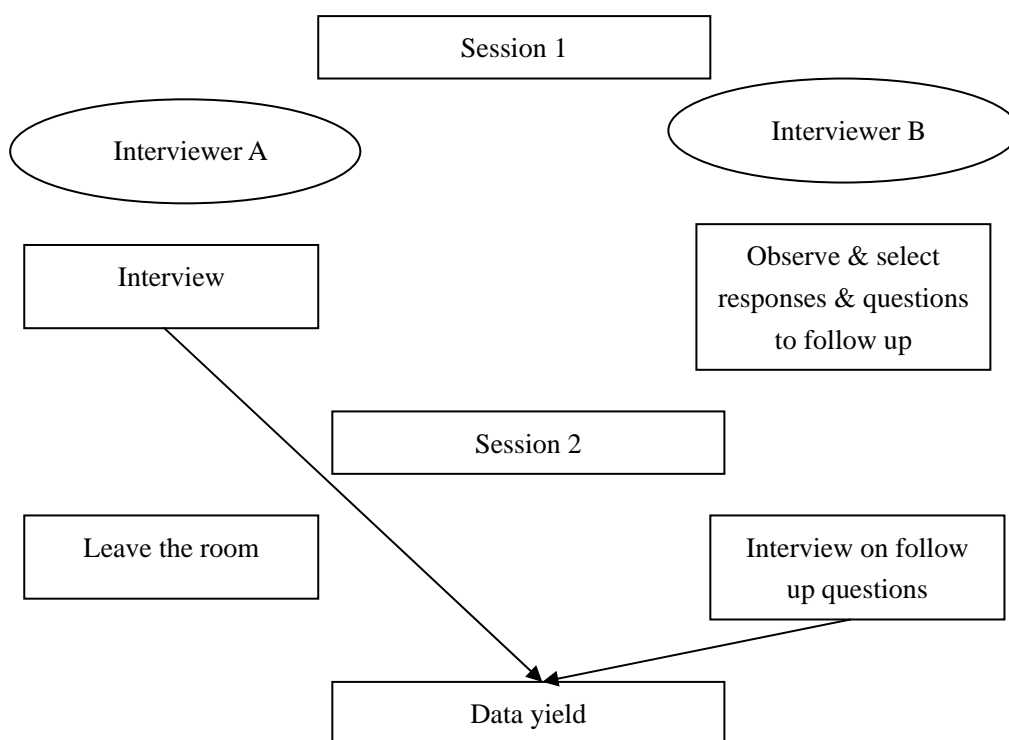


Figure 4: method of data collection, adapted from Thabo (2004, p. 55)

In other words, Thabo followed up on the responses and/or questions raised in De Beer’s interviews. For De Beer, if this follow up session yielded additional information, she used this information part of her data. For Thabo his interest was less on the data per se, but rather on whether there existed any differences between his data and her data.

“Before proceeding with the research, the general aim of the study was explained to the participants” (Thabo, 2004, p. 23), and the purpose of the second session was described to the participants so as “to clarify the researcher on their responses given in session 1” (2004, p. 23). Using his own words in the



interview, “I said that I want to understand further, what they said...what they know is that I want to understand further what they were saying.” So, in fact, “they [the participants] did not know my aim. They only knew her aim ... and knew my purpose of being there as the observer”, even until the whole field work was done.

The unique partnership between Thabo and De Beer also implied that, using Thabo’s words, De Beer was “the face of the whole research”, “she represents both of us” and “she is the leading person”, but, also practically, she was the one to select, approach and contact the participants. In fact Thabo never had any contact with any of the participants himself or went to meet them alone.

As a result of the intertwined nature of these two studies, the case below presents both De Beer and Thabo’s respective and, sometimes intertwined, understanding of their roles and experiences.

De Beer’s original participants included five Grade 7 classes, one each in the following five schools (two full-service inclusion schools with disabled learners and special accommodation for these learners and situated in contrasting socio-economic contexts; two regular schools that have disabled learners but do not provide any special accommodation for them and also in contrasting socioeconomic contexts; and one special school that caters for disabled learners only). Since I was interested in the qualitative part of this project only, I omitted the two schools (the regular schools) in which the ASC questionnaire only had been administered, but included one participant from each of the remaining three schools in which interviews and observation had taken place. The three participants were all teachers. Chisholm was a white female working in the special school. She was an experienced teacher who had taught for a long time. Van der Linde was also a white female working in a full-service school, but she had relatively less teaching experience. Both of them taught in relatively well-resourced schools. Kola was a black male teaching in a full-service school that was poor resourced.

5.2.1 Researcher/practitioner context

The main aim of De Beer’s study, as claimed in her dissertation, was to “provide educationist, educational leaders, managers and educators generally, with information as to what is required to improve the conversion of schools to full-service inclusion schools, and to minimise an inappropriate implementation of



the South African inclusive education and participation policy from casting up additional academic, social and emotional barriers before thousand of learners with impairments already experiencing barriers to their learning and participation” (2005, p. 5). Although this intention manifested a theory contribution element, the practical implication was also clearly visible. During the interview with De Beer she continued to highlight the importance of her practical considerations – “I don’t think research should solely be focusing on theory, it should be a practical spin off as well.”

She attributed this dual concern to her field—educational psychology.

In my field, our aim is to understand a learner in a context. So once you understand the correct theory, what you gonna do with that. And that’s where the more practical side comes in...especially in my field once again, because we are working with children, one needs to have a strong theoretical background, but sometimes I think it is not ethical if there isn’t any practical spin offs. Because when you are working with clients, with learners, so whatever you learn from theory, if theory is understanding of academic self concepts, then what. Now I understand it, what does that mean to that child in that class with that specific barrier to learning. So one tries to make it practical as well.

The practical benefit to participants had clearly been on her mind, not only “one of my final questions was what can I do for you”, but also when certain educators and parents did take her up on her offer she did everything she could to help. “One educator I gave contact telephone numbers that she might find useful, for a member of her family also has hearing impairment. That’s when I asked how can I help you. The other educator said, he expected that he could have problems the following year with the learners with Down syndrome, so I said you are welcome to contact me, and to see if we can work something out.” There was also one learner in the poorly resourced school,

I had extensive contact with her after the research. Well, during the research and after. During the research because I helped her to get an appointment for an audio test, after the research, we investigated several possibilities for school placement for her... At that stage, we went to another university to see an educational psychologist to help with the assessment of her strength and direct where she should go, and we also visited a special school in the same area. I arranged for her an appointment in the special school in town and also arranged for the assessment at a private school for her. The sad thing is that none of these schools wanted or could accept her due to the high numbers of students or due to her age.

Besides the influence emanating from her field, she also attributed her concern about helping with the practical needs of her participants to “I think it goes to the whole thing that they were participants, not objects, so it is not research done onto them, but it should be research done in collaboration with them, and



if there are any people who can benefit from it, it must be so”.

The topic of Thabo’s study indicated that he intended focusing on theory contribution only. He claimed in his dissertation that his study “aimed at sensitising the researchers about the effect that their role and that of the respondents play in the generation of data during a cross-cultural interview” (2004, p. 94). When I asked him about his perception of the relationship between theory and practical contributions he linked it with the level of the study,

If it is a research in the Honors level, as part of the module, and to do it is to get a degree. But one tends to hope that when a student goes to Masters level and PhD level, it is for contribution to knowledge, or it is to answer a certain question that the person has. Again, with Masters, it depends. Whether it is a course based Masters, where I have to do a research and that mostly is done simply because I want the degree. But when one has done that level, the hope is for contribution to knowledge...people at PhD level want to become academic, or they are doing it [they are academic already].

Later when we discussed benefits for the participants, he went on to explain his understanding of the relationship between the practical and theoretic contributions:

T: with your findings, you give them contact numbers for certain places to go if they want something, they can always contact those people, so it opens doors for those kind of people.

Y: are these only the kinds of research with practical aims, or also those that only has theory?

T: the one only has theory? I don’t know, it is bad. They can acknowledge the school, they can mention it in their speech, but confidentiality comes into play then. Because you can’t mention the school unless they agreed. Theory is difficult, remember, theory is abstract.

Y: so in that kind of situations, it is possible that the schools or the participants don’t benefit at all?

T: It can be theory, but you can still give them practical feedback. I remember a study done by a lady on policy of inclusive education, why it is not practical. That is the theory kind of research, but I would hope that the lady would give the schools a guideline on how to implement that policy. It is a theory, because it was meant for the government; but at school level, you can give them the guidelines on how to implement, how to teach a learner who is physically challenging.

Y: So you mean, in a way, the participants might prefer the kind of research that has practical benefit?

T: practical benefit. Yes. And practical benefit does not necessary mean anything physical, it can simply mean a contact number that, since I have done research with you in this particular school, and I have been talking in and out with the district, here is the contact number of the district, if you have any problems, contact this person. That is enough practical benefit to that particular school, to know that they can pick up the phone and phone the district, and the district would remember yes, it is that school, I remember this and that, and here is the findings of that particular school. That is practical benefit. That is why unfortunately we are *failing* (emphasised by his tone) in this. South Africa has a lot of dynamics. That is why it is very important, in South Africa, that the researchers are actually the teachers in the schools, because once we have researcher that are in the schools who is in the classrooms, the benefit, no matter theory or practical, is immediate, for that particular school and for that particular class as well.



Y: So you are suggesting that the focus on theory contribution might create a gap, or some indifference among the participants?

T: For the practitioners yes. But if the practitioners are the ones that are doing the theory research, that theory becomes practical.

Y: But then it is the benefit to the researcher. And only because the researcher is also the practitioner, the benefit indirectly goes back to practice.

T: yes.

De Beer speculated on several possible reasons why her participants had agreed to participate:

They were interested in it, especially I told them that this is about academic self concept, and some of them agree, said yes it is important. So yes, they were interested in that. Some of them I think were really just very nice. Oh, this is a student...I noticed, especially this one, this teacher, whenever I phoned him and said thanks so much, he would say, no you are welcome, phone me at anytime, he was really nice and straight forward and open... I didn't ask them [whether they are just thinking that they are helping me], but yes, perhaps because they are teachers, I think the nature of been teacher is that you help somebody else.

Thabo agreed that the participants would not derive any practical benefit from his part in the study, although "it concerns me, at a personal level, because I did always try to go the extra mile...although not directly. She [De Beer] was the one would speak further, suggest and make meeting, but I would only, maybe read more and try to put my ear on the ground, try to listen to what happens around, or try to come up with one way or another."

Since the participants were aware of De Beer' aim only and that was the only reason why they had participated, Thabo's guess in terms of why they had participated was:

In one particular school [the poor resourced school], they had a particular girl [the same girl that De Beer mentioned earlier who she had extensive contact with] that they really wanted to help...because she had hearing problem, and attending school in a critical environment, what is known as normal school, or normal hearing children. She was over-aging, in a lower grade. So their participation, I think was to get that girl some assistance in one way or the other. Because one, she [De Beer] took her to an audiologist free of charge, the parents, the school was in squatter area, so they couldn't offer all of those, so she [De Beer] exposed the girl to a lot of scientific testing, for her benefit, and they got report and suggestion of what to do. So the school and the class that participated, and the parent, they might participate because they were seeking medical attention that the child was not getting.

This anticipated practical benefit was echoed by the educator from that particular school, Kola.

We thought that after doing some research, maybe we would do some follow up research with that learner, because she is now in high school. And we would also try to help her, because you know she had hearing problems, we thought maybe after that, as a researcher, she [De Beer] can find some sponsors or she can come



and help the learner, like hearing aid and so on. Because the school is in an informal settlement, most of the parents are not employed. You can see that it is a disadvantaged school, so if somebody does research on that particular learner, we expect something, because also the parents are involved, they do have some sort of expectation... maybe after the research, something positive can be done, maybe donating a hearing aid, or a question of referral, you can take the child to a more suitable school. Things like that.

For Kola, concern for the child remained the main motivation for his participation.

For the sake of this girl, we need to do something, so this girl can at the end of the day achieve something, because whilst the other learners learn something, she was having some educational problems, then she might develop that kind of inferiority complex, and at the end of the day, she would drop out, so we need to involve [in research], we need to be involved, to help this kid, as far as the education for this girl is concerned...as long as it involves in the children, then I am happy because my profession is to work with the children. I am paid for that. (And you have a heart for that?) And I have a heart for that. As long as the research is about the child, then I am more than happy, but provided that those particular learners would also benefit from the research.

I probed about whether his personal benefit had played a role in his decision to participate or not.

Not necessary not of my concern, it is my concern, but learners should benefit as well. (So for your personal benefit, what kind of benefit were you anticipating?) As I said, as an educator, or as a person, I appreciate to learn everyday...I expected her [De Beer] at the end of the day, come back to me, report back to me, what are her findings, and recommendations, positive criticism, that was my expectations.

Van der Linde echoed Kola's view of the importance of the benefit to the children in her decision of whether to participate or not. "She [De Beer] was researching about inclusive education. I had a lot of Down syndrome and children with hearing impairment in my class. I actually thought that it was my duty to do that [to participate] for the benefits of the children."

According to Van der Linde, helping the researcher was another reason why she had participated. "I hope so [that I helped her], I hope that I did something helpful...it is not going to help me, but I want to help people, that is my personality. So when she said that you [refer to me] are doing this research, she phoned me as well and asked whether I had a problem, and I said no problem at all, if I can help somebody, it is fine."

Similarly, the notion of *helping* was also mentioned by Chisholm.

(Do you think that you are helping her in terms of her research or finishing her degree?) Well, I would hope so. Otherwise, it would be a waste of time for her and for me. Because it does take extra time from me, it does take something from you, because you got this person in your class and the children do behave differently, so it puts extra stress on you. I would hope that I had helped her.

However, the first reason Chisholm had mentioned when I posed the question "how did you decide to participate" was "the principal asked me." And she went on to explain that "because you've got teachers



who won't allow it [researchers to come into the classroom] ... I don't mind, but you do have the influence from the principal."

Aside from Kola, the other two participants had said that they did not expect any benefit, particularly personal benefit, from their participation. Although in retrospect, Van der Linde did think that her participation had resulted in greater enlightenment – made her think more and acquire more knowledge about inclusive education – and “the more you can do and the more you know, the better you can handle the children in the class... it made me again more aware of these children, how important they were, because you must be reminded about these kids the whole time. So it refreshed my memory”.

Van der Linde did not feel that her participation had contributed to her teaching practice, “you go on with what you always do”. Neither Kola nor Chisholm had perceived any benefit, particularly as regards their own teaching, and both attributed this lack of benefit to the fact that no results had been shared with them, despite promises to do so made by the researcher.

Y: at the end of the day, do you think that you learned anything, especially in terms of your teaching?

C: no, not really. Because we haven't discussed anything about my method. Because after a while, you get used to a method, the method that you use, and you stick to it, and sometimes it is a bit of problem for me because you know, to be teacher for this long...because you just get to work and do the subject each year, so that is a problem of teaching, because you get the same subject, the same children, same Grade, same everything, stays the same. In a way, that is also a good thing, because you know what works, that's the other side. But I think it maybe a good thing for somebody else to say you know what, I have seen this in school.

Y: so if she comes back with the findings, you probably would be able to get something?

C: yes, I think so. Even if it is just to read from what other people are doing. I think so.

Particularly in the case of Kola, his anger about not having been given the results surfaced repeatedly in his entire interview. In fact, even before I had started my interview with him, he raised the question of “what happened to De Beer, she said that she was going to come back to me”

I like researchers come back to me, come back and say we get this, and our findings are 1,2,3. Moreover, if somebody promises to come back, they need to do that.

We need to know what you did achieve with the information, what you achieved in your research and you should also recommend, when necessary. Come up with the recommendations that this is nice, we learned 1,2,3, and we can also improve on 1,2,3. Because if you do research, maybe you come to my class, you attend my lessons, you write something down, but at the end of the day, you don't show me what you have written on your piece of paper. That's why I say people should come back to me, come back with recommendations. (So that kind of feedback is important to you?) Exactly. Feedback, come out with some recommendation.



If you come to me and do research with me, and at the end of the day, come back to me. Come and rectify me, say this thing I think you can improve.

You know I was involved in that research, but I did not know all about this [the extensive contact De Beer had with the girl after the research]. That is why I was saying after the research, nothing was done, it was finished and I was cut off.

I expected her [De Beer] at the end of the day, come back to me, report back to me, what are her findings, and recommendations, positive criticism, that was my expectations.

(Do you feel empowered?) I would if there is the feedback.

As far as the responsibility of the researcher towards the participants, De Beer's main concern was "confidentiality and anonymity on the most basic level, but the other thing is more to value them as persons, especially to value their input. It is important not to look down on them as knowing more or knowing better, because they just think different. In their situation, they are the knowledgeable persons. I come to them for information. So I think one of the responsibilities was to see them as equal, and because they contributed some of their time and their knowledge to me, I felt, not exactly obligated, but to have something to return. Whatever I could do, I would do." She also expressed her concern about her responsibility to share the research results. "In the end, I gave my telephone number, and I told them that they are welcome to contact me for the research result. So I sort of placed the ball in their hands. But I still feel, and hope fortunately not too late, I didn't have the opportunity to arrange that, but I thought and I am still asking myself whether it wouldn't be valuable to arrange something with the school to share the research result."

Thabo thought that his "responsibility as a researcher was to make sure to keep my appointment, my time ... My responsibility towards the participants is I had to be there, I had to make them calm, I had to respect them, things like that." In the second interview after we talked about the possibility of his revealing aim to the participants after the research, he added, "I should have alerted them of my research as well at the end of the interviews, and I did not, I think that is my responsibility to do that". Nevertheless, he still insisted that the responsibility, especially in terms of follow-ups, lay with De Beer since "she was the face of the whole research, she went there for both of us...when she went there, she went to represent both of us. Especially with that girl, she has to do something, because you cannot open the wound and just leave it there".

Thabo did not mention confidentiality as part of his responsibility or as a responsibility of a researcher in general. However when I specifically asked him about the importance of confidentiality he said, "It is very



important, because of the research environment especially in qualitative research, it tends to bring out certain information that you won't easily get, depending on your questions as well. If you ask very touchy, personal questions, then they are not sure whether they are going to stay in the interview, then they will not participate, people will not participate.”

Kola, who seemed preoccupied with his anger about not receiving feedback, continued to stress that the researcher has the “responsibility of building me as a person, I want to repeat this, come up with some recommendation, it is the researchers’ responsibility, coming back with positive criticism, it is her [De Beer] responsibility, to make sure that me as a person gets that information, that information would build me, you see, that is the researchers’ responsibility to do that”.

Chisholm included punctuality and respect as the main responsibilities of researchers.

She only get responsibility to be on time, because that could be a problem, if somebody tells you I would be here on Mondays, then you get use to it, and the children get use to it, it is like that kind of responsibility...That is the only responsibility... and I expect respect for me as well. If something is not right in your eyes, then well, use whatever you need, but you don't discuss it with everybody, because sometimes it is a small world, you would get people say you know what. It is like an agreement; you don't go out and say she gets a very bad day today, things like that.

Van der Linde also mentioned respect as the most important responsibility of a researcher.

V: I don't want to look like a guinea pig. Once somebody asked me, I think it was a shower gel or something, you must use it for a month and then fill in a form, I had problem with it. I was not a difficult person, but that lady was difficult.

Y: how?

V: when you give your opinions, it was not respected. But the researcher, the other lady (De Beer) was quite nice. I didn't have any problem with it.

Y: so can I say that you think he/she has the responsibility to respect your opinion?

V: yes. That's all I want. Just respect what you are saying. You need to be able to speak of your opinion. That's it.

Since De Beer had mentioned confidentiality and anonymity as important responsibilities, I enquired whether she had asked her participants for their views and whether they might also have regarded these issues as important. She replied, “that's interesting, because I didn't ask them whether they wanted the work to be confidential. I just told them that I am going to treat the information and your identity with confidentiality and anonymity. I told them if I wanted to connect something they said, then personally I would come back to them for permission. I didn't ask them whether they want it to be anonymous.”



I proceeded to follow up on this issue of confidentiality with the three participants and their understanding of the issue varied. Van der Linde “don’t mind [to have my identity concealed in the research or not]. I think if it is something that is really personal or close to you, then it would be important. It wasn’t bothering me”. Chisholm revealed a similar attitude. She did not regard concealing her identity as important, “because she [De Beer] never asked me something very personal”. To her unless the topic was more personal, “I think then it is going to be a problem. But for the children, it doesn’t matter... just talking the way I am teaching... Maybe if it those kinds of personal topics, then it might be a problem, but not teaching.” On the contrary Kola preferred to have his identity concealed and explained his reason as follows:

You know, we are working with the South African government, something needs to be hidden, you don’t need to take everything out, because at the end of the day... the officials would say you said this 1,2,3, you should come to us district directly if you have a problem with this 1,2,3, only then you are aware that whatever you are saying will be problematic.

As for the responsibility of the participants towards the researcher, De Beer did not “even think that they have the responsibility to cooperate, that was just willingness. Their only responsibility was to be as honest as possible, always as accurate as possible.” She also did not regard practical issues such as the keeping of appointments to be the responsibility of the participants:

One can regard that as responsibility, because they said that they would cooperate, so one could see that as part of the cooperation. But I never regard that as not been responsible, I always tried to see from their side... I really regarded it as or tried to explain it in another way, as perhaps resistance, or sometimes they might have other reasons, or perhaps miscommunication. I never thought that it was their not been responsible.

Thabo, however, listed such practical issues as the responsibility of the participants. “For one, we had agreed on time, they had to be there. We agreed on the appointment, on the length, we agreed on engaging both two researchers, so they had those responsibilities.”

The views of the participants on their perceived responsibility towards the researchers centred mostly on the practical issues and on their honesty.

Do the interview as best as you can, if they want something more, want another interview or something, you said you would participate, then you must. (Van der Linde)

To tell her the truth. Otherwise there’s no use in her research. If I just make it like a very good and nice and very good teacher, what is the use. She is not going to see what it is real like. (Chisholm)



To provide proper information that she is looking for, to provide assistance to the researcher. Like been available, been puncture. (Kola)

5.2.2 Researcher–practitioner relationship

De Beer had not known any of the participants prior to the data collection. She approached the principals with the consent letter from the department, “informing them this is what I want to do and to ask their permission.” According to her, she did not experience any negative gate blocking. After the principals had granted her access, they introduced the subject to the teachers either in her presence or in her absence. In both situations not one of the teachers had refused to participate, although in both situations there had been one teacher whom she had suspected of feeling a certain amount of resistance about participating – either complaining a lot “whenever she saw me, she started to sigh” or setting the interview time at 6H30 (although she did acknowledge that this might have been the only time the teacher could manage). However, none of the participants refused outright and when she gave them “the opportunity, I told them if you don’t want to me to come, that is ok. They said, no, it is all right.”

Since resistance could have sprung from a lack of power to refuse after the principal had granted the researcher access (Burgess, 1991), I probed the participants about whether they preferred the researcher to access them via the principal. All stated that via the principal was the right way.

If it was about the class and the child, you must ask the permission from the principle. (So you feel more comfortable this way through the principle?) I think this is better if you work through somebody that you know, to introduce you to that person. (So it is good to go via the principle?) Yes. (Van der Linde)

I don’t think you can allow any person just to come here, I think you must go through the principal, because we do get a lot visitors... If somebody just comes in personal, I would be scared why this person doesn’t want to go through the principal, it just makes it official. (Chisholm)

(Do you think that the link through the principal is important to you?) Yes. If she came directly, it would be wrong because you need the right channels. You can not get into the family and talk to the child without talking to the parents, so she used the very good channel. (So you do prefer this way?) Exactly. Moreover, if it involves learner, the head should be aware of that, because the cameras were there, the tape recorder was there, just imagine if the principal is not aware of that. (Kola)

Chisholm continued to explain her understanding of the relationship between the principal and the teachers:

(If the principal said yes, but you personally are not very interested, do you think it might create some problems?)



It depends, but if I am not prepared, I would say it, I don't want to do it. You can't really do that, but (laugh). I think he also knows his staff, I think he asked the people who he thought wouldn't mind that much. (You mean he would keep your interest in his mind?) Yes.

De Beer had thought that it was important to explain her research aim and schedule to the potential participants before starting with the fieldwork "because one of the educators was concerned about how that would add to his workload. If I didn't have the contact they would be wondering for the whole week or so when I may contact. It is going to hang over uncertainty of what is exactly expected, so yes, I think it is important beforehand to clear that uncertainty." Kola specifically expressed his appreciation of these informative sessions.

Y: so before she started the questionnaire, she contacted you several times?

K: exactly.

Y: was that important to you?

K: exactly. Sometimes you need to know in advance somebody came to school and do 1,2,3. And even if somebody is going to interview you, you need to know in advance what does the interview entail... I need people to tell me in advance. What is it going to be...you know what I don't like is that, can I interview you today, in 15 minutes time, I don't expect that. People need to know in advance. On this day, I am going to attend an interview. I am going to be interviewed, and that is all...also the question of not to be inconvenient. Because in most cases, we work with schedules, on this day, I am going to do 1,2,3. So if you just say can I come,

Y: not giving you the choice?

K: exactly. That is kind of a un-professionalism.

De Beer's dual aim also had implications for what she called the dual role experienced in the research progress and the way she handled the involvement/detachment decision. "I had a dual role, I was a researcher, and I was an educational psychologist. And as a researcher I could do certain things, and couldn't do others, but as an educational psychologist, I could do other things. For example, as an educational psychologist, one is to provide support the whole time, but when I am researching I cannot provide too much support in case of influencing my results."

She acknowledged the difficult of maintaining a balance between involvement and detachment:

Y: So, how did you balance that?

D: It was difficult, when I had interviews with the learners and with the educators, one of my final questions was what I can do for you. And some of the educators took me up on that, and some of them said well there is nothing that you can do. But one of them said yes he wanted help with this and that, and I was able to arrange support for him, so that was sort of support. But it was a dual role.

Y: when you were doing research, were you trying to keep yourself distant?

D: Yes, a bit distant, when I did observation in the classes, I try to be a bit more distant, not to be involved in the classes, and sometimes the learners had their own argument, I tried not to be involved, but really just to observe.



Y: What about interviews? How were you handling that? For example, were you trying to not let them ask you questions?

D: No, no. If they want ask me questions, I let them ask questions. Some of the questions I was able to answer, or suggest a possible way forward, and as I said my final question was what can I do for you.

Y: So less distant in the sense?

D: No, that was more involved. Yes.

She provided most of the feedback or suggestions regarding a way forward after the fieldwork had been done because of her concern that her feedback could influence her data. “For the duration of the observations I could not, and I consulted my supervisor, I couldn’t give the feedback to the educators, because that would have influenced my observations.”

De Beer also had an interesting observation concerning those who asked for suggestions and advices.

Some of them (the teachers) had a lot of experience. I think they had a good sense of their teaching...they were not really concerned about what was going on. Some of the others I think they were unsure... they were slightly more uneasy, I could see, they looked at me or sometimes they tried to explain what was going on...and they would come to me after the class to ask what I think about the class or ask for advice...like this teacher, said well, this is how I do it, and what do I think about him. He mentioned that I must have seen a lot of teachers in different schools and how does his class compare to the others... And the one educator also asked me, tell me what to do and how should I do it, and again there I refrained from telling people things to do, because it could increase their uncertainty, so I told him, I focus on what he did correctly and emphasised them... And my response would always be positive... I like what you are doing, I never said that I think you should change.

In other words, because De Beer had understood that it might be intimidating to have somebody sitting in the class and that criticism might further intensify the insecurity of certain teachers, her strategy was to reassure the teachers about what they were doing and to provide positive feedback only.

De Beer described the following case when she was not happy with what she had observed:

I didn’t handle all of that. Whenever that was related with academic self concept and learners with hearing impairment, that was reflected in my thesis. The one instance, or incident, that I didn’t handle. The one educator in one school, she had a class of 54, and they didn’t do their homework. She went by each and every pupil, and she looked at their work, and they didn’t do it. I think four did it, and the rest of the class didn’t do it. She pinched them. It was terrible to me, you could really see that the children were hurt, that was very bad for me. The learner with hearing impairment wasn’t pinched. I think I said in my dissertations that it was disciplinary action, I didn’t literally say what happened. I just felt that I don’t know what I am not going to do if I am going to address that. Because how was I supposed to address that, first person I could address would be her. She was the one who was there for the class, she was perhaps already intimidated, or afraid, or hesitant resistant to participate, I knew I couldn’t address her about that...I can’t address that with the principal because I said that



the observation was confidential. The moment I address this with anybody else, I am going to break confidentiality. That was a difficult decision.

When I asked the participants how they would respond to criticism from the researcher all said that they would not mind long as it was positive and delivered in a constructive way.

(So if let's say that she has some critiques of what you were doing, and she told you about it, would you feel not comfortable?) It depends whether you want to take it personally or you reflect on it. Actually you need to listen to somebody, not not listen. (So let's say if you get into argument, don't you particularly feel that it is a bad thing?) No, you can give you opinion. I think she can voice her opinion and me mine, I think then we can exchange, it is a matter of opinion, not offending, I don't see it like that. (Does it depend on the way it is said?) Yes. (So if you feel that it was said in a respectful way, then you won't mind?) Yes. (Van der Linde)

If she makes suggestions how I can improve and give new ideas, I wouldn't mind. If she can motivate why she thinks that my methods are wrong and I agree, it will be fine. The point is that the criticism needs to be justified. (Chisholm)

(Will you be afraid if the findings come back and say you should not have done that or come back with some critique?) No, I don't have any problem with that, because we learn everyday. So as long as it is a positive criticism, not a negative one. Come out with something, don't just say this is not good, but not without any suggestions. (You mean alternatives?) Exactly. Otherwise I don't think it is fair. Because we need to learn, we learn every day. The wise man used to say that nobody is perfect. Nobody is perfect, you see. If you come to me and do research with me, and at the end of the day, come back to me. Come and rectify me, say this thing I think you can improve. There are beautiful ways of putting things, you can say this is wrong, or you can also come up with positive criticism. (Kola)

As far as the relationship was concerned during data collection, De Beer thought that "it was a bit of both formal and informal. Some of the educators kept it strictly formal, some of them more informal. The one educator spontaneously shared about her sister who was in bed and ill for quite some time, that I think was more on the informal side." And since it varied from person to person, she "tried to engage per teacher of what they wanted."

Nevertheless, De Beer still classified the researcher-participant relationship occurred in her study as more research based and provided the example of the way in which they addressed each other (although she did recognise that this phenomenon could result from other factors), "I told all of them my full name, I didn't say that I am Mrs so and so, and some of them used my first name, but I think most of them prefer to call me Mrs. That is why I think they tried to keep it more formal."

She herself also preferred a relationship that was more research based.



Personally I think that I would prefer a research-based relationship, the friendship part comes in supporting the research, but I don't think it should overwhelm it... If one doesn't have the friendship part, there isn't much spontaneity or friendliness. You don't share easily if it is merely research based. But if it is too much friendship, it might be that the person participating in research feel that he/she is too much involved, then it would be the friendship that would be researched, not the contribution to the research...So perhaps one should say that one become used to somebody, and because when you are used to someone, you are comfortable in their company...We were not necessary friends in the sense of talking about my parents and my husband and my future plans and etc, but they were used to my presence, and they were used to my doing things, that they were comfortable enough to share...even though we weren't friends, they were just used to me and comfortable with my presence of who I am... but it is not necessary friendship, although I was friendly, I don't think it was necessary friendship.

Thabo also described the relationship with the participants as “semi-formal – they were not too formal and they were not too informal. They were in the middle. As psychologists we know how to put people at ease, the interview setting, how we sit with people, that we make sure that there were no barriers between us, we sit in a certain format that is closer, and our tone of voice.” More specifically he described their relationship as follows:

More of respect, respect the individual in front of you, indicating to them that you are doing research, not retelling, or re-teaching, more about I want to know, that is why I am asking this question. That is why in the beginning, we would explain the reason why we were asking these questions because we want to know, not because we want to teach you anything, we want to mark you, or critique you or whatever, but we want to know. Give them that regard, that respect that every point of time, they have the knowledge that you are looking for.

The participants' perception of the nature of the relationship differed. Chisholm described it as “formal because now I think back, I don't know anything about her really, and that I don't think she knows anything about me as a person, so I think I would say formal.” She clearly expressed her preference for this type of relationship.

I like it...I don't think that you should really get involved...it was good when she was in the class, we really did not have any problems, and she was a really nice lady and we really get along very well. It was no problem at all from my side, but we did not get further. (And you do not want to go a bit further?) No. No. Maybe, say for instance, if she is still involved in our school, on another level, maybe she saw something, she say ok, in my research I saw this, and this and this can be improved, and she came to the school and help me with that, maybe then, we could. But that did not happen in that kind of situation...our relationship is more research based, not personal based, and I like it.

Nevertheless she did express that she needed the comfortable, relaxed environment that friendliness creates, “(so am I right to say that you feel that she is friendly, but you are not necessarily friends?) Yes. (And you



like that kind of situation?) Yes. (But you do need the person to make you feel more comfortable, more relaxed?) Yes. (And a bit not so formal?) Yes.” And she also indicated that she liked to have a researcher who would not only ask questions, but also answer questions, “if I cannot ask what this is about, then it would be difficult for me, I also want to know exactly what it is all about, otherwise I would feel uncertain.”

Van der Linde also described their relationship as research based.

V: more research based. It wasn't a friendship at all. I only saw her when we were at the research and then when she came back for it, and that's it. Not a friendship.

Y: you mean that you only meet in the school?

V: yes.

Y: so do you like that she is doing it more research based?

V: yes. I think it is objective. I think this is better.

Y: so you don't think it is necessary to have friendship in a research?

V: no, I don't think so.

Y: would it make you more comfortable or it won't make any difference?

V: it really doesn't matter. I am actually a people's person, easy to talk. But I think people differ. Some people might talk easier if it is friendship based. Yes, it might make it a bit easy, if you think about it, you talk more easily about your feelings, how you feel with your friends, because they know you. So it differs from personality. It might be more difficult for some people.

Y: but for you, it is not a problem?

V: no, it is not a problem at all.

Y: is it also that your relationship is more formal than informal?

V: yes, I think the interview was more formal than informal.

Y: so there wasn't many chats or?

V: in between? No, not at all.

However, she also expressed a preference for a certain element of informality – such as using first names, “I asked her not [to call me by my surname], I don't like that, so I asked her please call me by my first name. That makes it a bit more informal. If somebody talks in surname, it is a bit formal and then you don't know what to say, then you must think very carefully.” This informal preference was also extended to a preference for a researcher who would also answer questions, “You also need to answer questions as well. Otherwise, it would be a lot too formal, and you would be a bit stressed, if you only ask questions. (So am I right to say that you do think that the relationship should be a bit informal?) Yes. It must be, otherwise it is not going to work, I think. Then you won't be very open and honest... If it is very formal and the person is very arrogant and dominant, I probably would feel used.”

Kola described their relationship as a both a friendship and a research-based relationship, although, on



closer examination, the friendship to which he referred seemed more like friendliness.

It's both friendships and research-based relationship. It was a friendship in the sense that when they came to the school, they tried to create friendship. If a stranger comes to your class, sometime we would be nervous, so they created that kind of friendliness. And in terms of their research, well, they did their job...they were so kind, they were always smiling, that is why I felt so free, unlike somebody coming down with some faces, that would be not fine.

To him friendliness was of the utmost important in creating an informal environment in which he would feel open enough to talk to the researcher.

Y: so that kind of friendly face is very important to you?

K: exactly because it makes you free.

Y: so between a relationship that is more research based and a relationship that is more friendship like, do you have a preference?

K: I think friendship comes first.

Y: so you mean friendship needs to be there?

K: it needs to be there, yes. Let me give an example, you have a kindly face, you welcomed me with a smile, then I become relaxed.

Could friendship have jeopardised the research data? De Beer stated her preference for a research-based relationship was reflected in her answer "if it is too much friendship, then it would be the friendship that would be researched, not the contribution to the research". Thabo overtly expressed his strong opposition to any element of friendship.

Your personal relationship has somehow advantaged you to get in, but it does not have advantage to your data, because they would say things to please you... it might be not only the participants to please you, but also the researchers to please them. The researcher could ask questions in a soft glove, rather than in a hard glove that would have done with another participant that they don't know...it does come to play. People with relation, be it whatever relation it can be, say they know each other, they relate to each other, they bump to each other in town, now they see each other in research interviews, it does effect the way the participants response and it does affect the way the researcher ask question...in a friendship, that would be power that I am your friend, I am not suppose to, or I won't do something to offend you...must I really respond that way to a friend, must I say that, that time lag, that would also affect the data, in one way or another...You might find that with those that you don't know, chances are that the influences would not have been there.

I posed the same question to the participants. Kola stated that friendship would have affected his responses, but not in the negative sense. Rather, he thought that it would have enhanced his spontaneity and the information he had provided would have been more comprehensive.

Y: so let's say if she [De Beer] comes back to you and do another research, do you think the way you respond would be different?

K: yes, I will. I will be freer than the first research.



Y: you would be more free? So it is in the good sense?

K: exactly.

Y: so it is not really if she comes back, you would be more mindful of what you said, hence that you would say less?

K: as I said, there are some things that made me unsettled, like the picture that they took, what are they going to do. But if she can come back now, I am really used to her, so the responses, I would be more free than the first research.

Y: so you are saying that the information you give would be fuller?

K: exactly.

Y: so in that sense, friendship to you is not necessary a bad thing?

K: yes, it is very important because you become freer. Unlike a very tense situation, hence I am saying that if she is coming back, it would be better because it would be more informal.

Y: and you do prefer it to be more informal?

K: yes. Exactly.

Van der Linde expressed a similar attitude, although for her, it was more about the expression, and not necessarily the content of her responses.

Y: do you think if she had been your friend, the answers you give would be different?

V: yes, I think in a way, it would be a bit different because you are more relaxed and you are talking more in a friendship level. So I think it would differ a bit. Yes.

Y: do you mean that if she had been your friend, you would feel more relaxed?

V: yes, I think it is more like expressing yourself.

Y: is it more about the way you express yourself or it is about the content of what you say?

V: I think it is the expression of yourself, not the content.

Y: so what you said to her would not be different?

V: no. Not that much.

Y: is it just that you might express yourself more in a spontaneous way?

V: yes.

After the data collection De Beer had organised an occasion in which to express her appreciation.

When I finished, I gave each of the teachers who participated a small gift, just to say really thank you for what they have done or contributed, the small gift was a small portrait notice that they could put somewhere, and I put their name on it, personalised, and I wrote very personal messages, short but something that they would realise that it was not a mass production, and together with a card. On the card, I said thank you for participation, once again something I learned from them, or enjoyed in their classes...they were very surprised. Very surprised and very thankful. Actually I was taken back or humbled by their reaction to that. Because it was really something that is so small. But their reaction was so overwhelming. So I was thinking if something so small could make them react in such a way, then they really must have felt, I think they must have underestimated how much they helped me. And when I gave them the gift, I think then suddenly they realised, wow, they contributed to something, perhaps that is also the reason why the reaction was very overwhelming. The one lady said that she was going to put it on her bed, bedside table, every night when she close her eyes, that's the last thing she would see, and when she wakes up, that would be the first thing she sees. (Very honored?) Yes. I just got the feeling that it really meant something for her. And that was special to me.



Thabo also wrote messages in the cards and they both signed their names. In one school, "they were very busy at that stage, if I remember correctly, I couldn't hand to them personally, I think I put it on their desks". For other schools, both were there to hand them out.

Thabo also thought that it had been a good thing to express their appreciation. "As a token of appreciation for people who did not have to participate, but participated...another thing about gifts, it is a good practice, apart from being good practice, it is also a good gesture, and future orientated as well. When other people come to do research, they would be willing because they know that people are appreciative, not bribing, but appreciation of their time. You don't do research for your own study alone, and then close it and close all the gates. Researchers as well are gatekeepers, and gate-openers as well, for the future researchers [influencing participants' willingness to participate]."

As rightly indicated by De Beer, the gesture of thanks was appreciated by the participants.

(There was a time that she came back and gave out some gift, was that nice?) Yes, that was nice. I still have that in my class. It was very nice for her to do that. Because I think it was not really necessary. (But you appreciated it?) Yes, very much. (Van der Linde)

In the end, I think it was the last day, she did bring the children sweets, to say thank you, I think that was quite nice of her, I thought she really appreciated our time. (Chisholm)

Like sending card. I think that is an informal friendship as well, which I did appreciate as well. If somebody sends you a card after doing a very good job, then you take it as a token of appreciation, and you feel that you did a very good job. (Kola)

Together with the gifts De Beer also wrote on the cards, "research would be complete by this or anticipated to complete by this and that time. I gave my telephone number, and I told them that they are welcome to contact me for the research result." However no one enquired about the results. In fact, Van der Linde did not show much concern about the results, "(Was it important for you to have that?) No, it was not important to me. (So you don't want to know what the result is?) No. I think it was a very busy time of my life, I only wanted to help. When she came back, she said that she was going to give it to me, but I don't know whether she gave it to the principal and he did not give it to me. But I didn't ask for it." "It was never like a formal agreement: listen, I would send you this and this", for Chisholm, "I think in the end, she said ok, maybe she would let me read it afterwards when she is finished. No, it is not so important, but it would be nice if she had done it."



However, consistent with his desire to participate and his wish that the researcher would come back with suggestions for improvements, Kola expressed his deep concern about not receiving the results.

The expression of appreciation also symbolised the retreat of the researchers from the field in this research. Although Kola said that De Beer did still phone him from time to time, “Hi, how are you? How are you doing fine? I am doing fine”, it was De Beer only who contacted him, not Thabo. The other two participants stated that they had never been contacted by either researcher after the data collection had finished.

Did the researchers and also the participants prefer closure? I posed this question to all five and received the following responses.

De Beer was of the opinion that “consideration is that after the research, if you make it friendly, then it also means that the relationship needs to be continued. To be really classified into friendship, the friendship must continue.”

PhD is a very big thing, but it is not the only research project, and it is not going to be feasible to keep contact with everyone on a continuous base, especially if you want to be honest in your relationship. If it is really about something that I wanted to know, I will phone them and ask them for that, but to keep an official kind of contact with everyone, probably it is not going to work...it might be feasible to scale down to a lesser contact. If you find something, say you read this interesting article, perhaps she might be interested in, that's perhaps the way to keep contact.

Thabo shared a similar view, “Unless somehow fate keeps you to meet them and have contact in some way...the relationship ended because the contract was ended, the contract was from this time up to that time, and I give you the findings, and that is it.”

De Beer suspected that the participants would prefer closure as well, and this was confirmed by both Van der Linde and Chisholm.

(Do you think they might prefer a certain kind of closure instead of continuity of the relationship?) Yes, yes. They are busy enough. I think it is nice to know that they are doing this and then it is over. (And finish?) Finish and something else. Yes. (De Beer)

(Do you think that it is important or necessary to keep a certain kind of contact?) No, I don't think so. Only if she want you to do something for the research, then it is fine. But I don't think it is necessary. (So am I right to say that actually you prefer a closure after the research?) Yes. (Don't want to hang on?) No. I like the closure. (What about if she phones you from time to time just to say hello and how you are?) I don't have a problem with that. But I won't be expecting that, not at all. (Would that make you feel better?) It does not really matter to me.



It would be nice if she does that, fine, it does not bother me at all. I won't be wondering why she is not calling me, it does not bother me at all. (Van der Linde)

(Am I right to say that you decided to participate in a research for a purpose and that's it?) That was the purpose and that is all. (And that only, that is fine for you?) Yes. (So am I also right to say that you actually do not want to have a certain kind of continuity after the research?) No, I don't really think that it is necessary. Unless it was really something that she can help me to improve. (So am I right to say that you do want to have a closure when a research is finished?) Yes, yes. Maybe just say this is what I find and that is what I saw in other schools... (Is it the kind of formal closure important to you, say for example, come back to you and say you participated in my research and now I finished my degree?) Yes, for me as a person yes, it would be nice just to hear that she is finished. Cause I think it is also achievement. So at least you finish the job. No, it is not that important, it would not make a difference, but it would be nice, I would like to know. (Chisholm)

Again, Kola expressed a different opinion to that of the other two participants. He stressed that he would have preferred the relationship to continue, not only in terms of providing feedbacks but also on a personal level.

K: I don't like if somebody after doing that job, just disappear.

Y: so if that happened, you are going to feel?

K: been used. Because truly speaking, sometimes you feel that you have been used, somebody got the information and then she is fine, and then she just disappeared.

Y: so coming back and continuity are important?

K: exactly.

Y: do you also think that you need some kind of closure, like I know this project is finished and it has been closed?

K: not really that type of closure. I need it to go on, we mustn't end there. It must just go on,

Y: go on in which ways?

K: like the she is doing, hello, how are you...

Since Thabo's intention and aim of his research had not been revealed to the participants, there was an additional issue that needed to be addressed here – The way in which participants view research with a hidden agenda.

In his dissertation, Thabo had attributed his decision not to disclose his full intention to "a blunt statement about the purpose of the study might have compromised the data by unduly sensitising the respondents to the issue of culture" (2004, p. 23). In his interview he expressed a similar view. "My research was not as sensitive as it might come out to be [in terms of getting personal information], but it is sensitive methodologically... If I told them, methodologically it would have been affected."

In this regard one question still remained. If the concern had been that disclosure would have affected the



data why had he not disclosed his research after the fieldwork was finished? I asked Thabo whether there was any particular reason why he had chosen not to inform the participants, and he replied, “not particular reasons whatsoever on my side. (So you sort of thought both—disclose afterwards and not disclose at all—are fine and just choose an easy way out?) (pause) Yes.”

The other practical problem regarding his decision not to disclose, even on completion of the fieldwork, was that there was thus no chance that his statement “my research was not as sensitive as it might come out to be” would ever be verified or disputed since in any follow-up studies, such as this study, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to bring up this issue with the participants. His answer to my mention of this potential problem was also rather vague, “it does not create problem as such. Remember what I said in the beginning, we as researches are also gatekeepers and gate openers (gatekeepers in the sense that no follow up can be made? question added).”

So I was left with a dilemma – did I tell the participants or not? After a discussion with both researchers we decided not to disclose his aim specifically, but rather to ask general questions about the participants’ views on research with a hidden agenda. The main rationale behind this decision was that if I now informed them, the original fieldwork had been finished a long time before and they did not have the opportunity to react to this information directly (to the original researchers), this could have left them with feelings of discontent about the relationship. Although it might still be ethically problematic, I was of the opinion that they would be better off not knowing Thabo’s intention, particularly in terms of their emotions.

How, in general, did the participants view the issue of research with a hidden agenda²⁷? Interestingly Van der Linde’s reaction was:

Y: sometimes research has to be done with a certain degree of deception, in the sense that if I tell you in advance, you might behave differently. So then I don’t tell you in advance. Do you think that might be a problem for you?

V: I don’t know. I think if they have to do it, they should not tell the person.

Y: they can tell you afterwards, or they can decide not to tell you at all.

V: I think if they are doing that, they must not tell me. I think it’s better to know before-hands than afterwards.

Y: if compare with afterwards and not at all?

V: then better not at all, otherwise, I would be always thinking about it.

On the other hand the other two participants expressed their strong opposition to such a situation.

²⁷ The word of *hidden agenda* might have a negative implication. However, as indicated in the quotes, I did mention specifically the situation in which this hidden agenda had occurred.



Y: do you think that it is important that a person come to you to do a research and do not have a hidden agenda?

C: yes.

Y: if they have something hidden, you might not like it?

C: yes. If I get the feeling, if this is about something else, then I would say, I would make a plan (laugh). You see that is experience and my age, you know you don't want to waste your time. That is very important.

Y: what about if the deception is the only choice? For example, in psychology, if they tell you in advance, you might behave differently. Say it is hidden agenda, but it is a good hidden agenda?

C: no, I think then it can't be hidden agenda. I am the adult here, I must know about it, the children don't need to know, if she tells me this is what is actually what I wanted to see, but we can't tell them, but then I can decide if that is all right for the children. But if there is a hidden agenda, but I don't know about it, I wouldn't participate anymore. Even if it is a good intention, but I need to know about it, it cannot be hidden from me.

As Kola had shown strong sensitivity (see the emphasised part in the following quote), his reaction towards a hidden agenda was even stronger.

Y: if somebody comes to you and say that they are doing this research, but actually they want to use the information for another research, do you think you personally would not like that?

K: I will not like that. I will not like that. Hence I talked about transparency. What are you researching about, what are you going to do with the information. What am I going to benefit out of that, that's what I really need to know.

Y: and that is very important to you?

K: yes, that is very important to me. If you are taking this information that I give to you now and use it for another purpose, at the end of the day, me as a person, it means that you put me in a danger. And if somebody takes the information and uses it for another purpose, then it is no good. *So I take your research as a continuation of that one (De Beer's), that's why I am not having a problem. And if there is a hidden agenda, then who is to be blamed.*

Y: *I am not referring to any research, I am just asking in general.*

K: *you need to be sensitive.*

Y: I can see that. But what about if that is a no choice, if they tell you in advance, you would behave differently. If that is the reason, would you accept not telling the full information in advance?

K: no, I won't take it. I need people to tell me in advance. What is it going to be, people need to know.

5.2.3 Evaluation of the relationship

Despite some complaints, especially from Kola, the researchers and participants did view the researcher–practitioner relationship they had experienced as positive.

De Beer had noticed that teachers were generally very busy, so, as she had realistically expected them not to be very cooperative, most of the participants had indeed cooperated more than well. “Most of them did, actually all of them did, only two of them were, or might be, a bit resistant.”

All three participants also expressed their positive views of the experience.



It was the first time that somebody actually sit down with me and she recorded it and it was not just a form to fill in. So that was interesting for me, I was a bit scared in the beginning, it is new, that was actually very interesting for me, she was the first one. She was so friendly... it was very relaxed. You can see that it is for the benefit of the child, and that's nice, you can see that she wants the best of the child, so that is nice... (So at all times, you were feeling comfortable?) Yes. (And been respected, you can voice your opinion?) Yes. (Van der Linde)

She was very professional. I don't have a problem with her...I had a good impression of him... (And you said that in general, you experience the interview as positive?) Yes. (Chisholm)

They were so kind, they were always smiling... And they create an environment that is comfortable...there were some sort of professionalism there...(how do you in general find them as researchers?) they were so good. As I mentioned earlier, they were so cooperative, they were trying to make us settled, all those things. Trying to inform us in advance, what are they going to interview us, all those things. (So you find it quite professional?) Exactly. (Kola)

Thabo shared this perception of the positive feeling, "In general, they were very very very cooperative. They were very cooperative...it was positive...they did have positive regard or experience, and I think I can safely, with limitation say, if a researcher goes to these schools, they would be welcomed." This willingness to participate in future research was confirmed by all participants.

(So am I right to say that if you are approached by another person for research, you probably are going to agree to participate?) Yes, I will. I don't have a problem. Even if it is not in my field, it is still fine, as long as I feel that I can help. (Van der Linde)

(So am I right to say that if another person approaches to you and ask you to participate in another research, you probably would say yes?) I think so. You know, if I think it is the way of helping the people, then I would do that. If I think that is a waste of time, if somebody comes here and they are messing around, then I would say thank you very much and good bye. (Chisholm)

(Am I right to say that if another person approaches you for another research, you probably are going to agree?) Yes, I will, whole-heartedly, whole-heartedly. (Kola)

5.3 Case 3 (category III):

Sehlola-- Sir, on what page is the answer? Exploring teacher decision-making in the context of complex curriculum change (PhD)

The main purpose of this study was to "understand how and why teachers make particular curriculum decisions at the interface of multiple curricula" (Sehlola, 2004, p. 2). The multiple curricula forming the background to this study referred to:



- 1) An old apartheid curriculum;
- 2) Curriculum 2005 (C2005), initially launched in 1998 by the new South African government, with the underlying methodology of outcomes-based education. The aim of C2005 was to replace the old curriculum and achieve more autonomy in the classroom “to decide what kind of context they are going to teach, what kind of the studies they want to use, not just the subscribe as what it used to be (from interviews with Sehlola)”.
- 3) A streamlined version of C2005. “As a result of the complex structure and design of C2005, tight timeframes, the lack of quality teacher training support materials, and the incapacity of provincial authorities to support teachers effectively (Chisholm, 2000, as cited by Sehlola, 2004, p. 1), a streamlined version of C2005, “a new or thin” version of the curriculum, substantially different from the ‘thicker’ version” (Sehlola, 2004, p. 2), was introduced for discussion in 2001 and finalised in 2004 for implementation in all South African schools.

During the design and data collection phase of this study, these three curricula were, somehow, operating simultaneously in South African classrooms: the old curriculum, although in the process of being phased out, still exerted a powerful influence on daily classroom practice; C 2005 — “the initial implementation schedule of C2005 was still being followed, meaning that C2005 was still introduced in all Grade 9 classrooms in 2002” (2004, p. 2); and streamlined C2005, “towards the end of 2002, anecdotal evidence emerged which suggested that some teachers were already using all or part of the streamlined version of C2005, despite the fact that it was not yet official departmental policy and was still under construction” (2004, p. 2).

In such a context, the main aim of this study was to investigate “how teachers understand the critical differences between the traditional curriculum, the new curriculum and the revised version of this new curriculum? Why and how do these teachers make strategic curriculum decisions at the interface of these three curricula in their classrooms ?” (2004, p. 3)

The data for this study was collected from three Grade 9 natural science teachers at three different schools (2004, pp. 56-57). The data collection methods included two in-depth semi-structured interviews (one at the beginning of the project before classroom observation and the other at the end of the research process); classroom observation (30 lessons for each teacher); pre-lesson and post-lesson interviews (while replaying the videoed lesson to them) and document analysis (including teachers’ diaries and field notes).

The entire data collection period extended over a period of approximately 10 months. In the dissertation,



two out of the three teachers were reported upon because “I came to realise that there were so many commonalities among the three participants that a third comprehensive case report would not have added significant value to my argument” (2004, p. 60).

Both participants (Stevens and Billana) that were reported upon in the dissertation shared their experience and perceptions with me. Both participants were science teachers at the time of Sehlola’ study. Billana had been taking MBA courses at the time, and, by the time I approached them, he had been promoted to the offices of the Department of Education. Stevens and Sehlola were, in fact, from the same town and had studied in the same university, although this relationship had been discovered only after Stevens had agreed to participate.

5.3.1 Researcher/practitioner context

The main aim of this study, as officially stated in the dissertation, was to “addresses the ‘gap’ in scholarship ...” (2004, p. 11). As the intention was clearly to make sense of how and why teachers made certain classroom decision, but not to change teaching practices, this research was largely a theoretical study.

As for the question as to why all those student-researchers who demonstrated a relatively deep understanding of the researcher-participant relationship were only concerned about theoretical contributions, Sehlola provided several possible explanations:

- 1) The reason why his aim was theoretical yet he cared about the researcher-participant relationship could lie in the nature of qualitative study itself:

I think the fact that it was qualitative in nature means that the relationships, how people understand and get connection to each other, was crucial to unfold the story, putting the fresh to the story for the reader. So, I was engaging in this reflection, on our relationship, to give a better picture, to print a broader picture, a better picture, a more colorful picture, and hopefully create a richer story... I want people to see what I was immersed of myself, what I was immersed in, and what these teachers were doing in schools, and to paint that picture or to describe that as comprehensively and as fully as possible, for people to see why I am making the conclusions that I am making, or why I am arguing with the arguments that I am making. Without that broader picture I think, ones arguments will be found wanting and nonsense.

- 2) The reason why he did not aim at changing or improving teaching practice was to be found in the



uniqueness of his topic:

I was to study the teacher and make sense of how they make decisions, without complicating the matter by trying to add another layer onto the complexity that they have already. For that particular teacher, in terms of making sense of the curriculum policies, the different kind of things that they got to face to. You see that my thesis talks about this intensification of teachers' work, so I really didn't want to go in there with another intensifying layer that they got to deal with. I think that could make a complete different study. It was consciousness of my part of not to complexify the matter further than that. I think that would probably have been a worthwhile dimension of it, but I think it will just complexify, complicate the matter, for both the researcher, myself and also the teacher.

- 3) Another reason why he was interested in theory contribution could perhaps be found in the influence from his supervisor. Not only were all three students from category III under the same supervisor, but this supervisor was also known for "always pushing, me and the PhD class as well, to make sure that you advance some knowledge on the particular topic that you are working on".

Obviously I think that probably came out of quite strongly, or that was one of my main drivers, because he was my supervisor and I am not sure if I would have the same emphasis if I had somebody from somewhere else, for example. Yes it was a major thing for him and obviously you do what your supervisor want you to do, because you have to go through him, the product has to go through him before it goes to the external evaluators, so if he is not satisfied that you have done enough for this qualification, then you won't have it.

Sehlola suggested that the different participants might have had different reasons for participating in his study.

One teacher, I think he was willing to expose his own practice to academic with the hope of learning from that person, am I doing right, am I on the right track. Some teachers may just be happy to have somebody to give commentary on what they see in their classrooms; for some people, it is just important to engage with other people about the policy and practice, but for the teachers that I was particularly working, I think it helped them to make the decisions.

More specifically, he suggested that his original participants had participated because "they had the expectation that they would be able to learn from this as well, I think, one or two are quite explicit that this is a learning experience, a learning curve for them." In fact, he held to this statement, as the following quote illustrates.

N²⁸: I think I am very convinced that they had learned something.

Y: in terms of what?

N: in making them think about what they are doing and about their practices and about the way that they make certain decisions about practice. It also came out from the thesis that there wasn't a lot of dynamic and active

²⁸ I used N to represent Sehlola to avoid confusion with another S, which represented one of his participants – Stevens.



reflection on the curriculum translation by these teachers, and I think through the kind of questions that I was asking and the kind of calling I was doing, it must have made them think a little bit.

Y: did you ask them about it?

N: I am not sure. Initially I wanted to look at how teachers understand the differences between the old curriculum, curriculum 2005 and the revised one, and I got into the schools and got these teachers. It was almost like a year that the revised national curriculum statement was on the table, and these teachers didn't know about what I was talking about, so I think it should have, could have, I am sure it did.

Y: how are you sure?

N: I am sure because I can remember the frowns and the amazement that this thing was already on the table, and there was already a policy document, and they didn't know that this complicated curriculum 2005 had been refined, so I think just from my reading of the body language and the facial expressions. And I suppose also in the interaction with them verbally afterwards, I could pick up that after that point, they had started to pick up a bit more about this revised National Curriculum statement, which I am not sure whether they would have made an effect to if I have not approached the subject with them. And that's just one example. And there are many others that I probably won't be able to recall numerically to all of them. In many practical situations or situations where they were doing practicals, for example, they were doing something with the learners, which I found a little bit,

Y: not so right?

N: interesting (laugh).

Y: in good sense or in bad sense?

N: in both senses. Sometimes in the not so good sense. And I suppose it comes out in the writing as well, for example why they were using the worksheets so mechanically in doing practical work, moving from one question to the other. I found it very interesting, and so I think by the type of questions that I was asking, it made them think whether this is the right way to do it, isn't there a better way. Sometimes I would ask, wouldn't it work better if I have done x y z, instead of just following it this way, and I think through those kind of questions, I cant see how they could not have learned just a little bit.

Y: but you did not specifically confirm with them?

N: I am sure, I must have a hint; I must have asked that question in an informal way, during my debriefing session with them. And I am sure that I did not reflect it in the thesis, because it wasn't one of my major aims, these teachers learned this and that from me or from this action. It wasn't a big thing, but I am sure that was expressed, that there was an indication that was good experience for them.

Interestingly, when I raised the question of what benefit the participants could have anticipated and experienced, Billana's answer was more in the line of research, and not teaching. "(In terms of knowledge or reflection, do you think you benefited?) Very much so, very much so. Because I came to realise how one can best conduct a research, I think now if I were to conduct a research, I will be advantaged compared to a person who has never participated in any research project. I know what type of questions to ask and how to ask them and how to support a person during an interview. "

When I referred specifically to the effect of participation on teaching, the same participant answered:

B: In terms of my actual teaching, there was no benefit, in fact there was disruption. The programme somehow disrupted.



Y: In which way?

B: In the sense that he would come to the class with the video machine and try to capture what is happening in the classroom. He tried to be as passive as possible, but you know how kids are, the mood would change immediately when they see a video camera, they would think the news broadcast has come to shoot them, then I would spend more time on discipline, instead of doing the actual teaching. And then I would have to explain now and then that this is about research, just behave normal. But you know how kids are. With regard to my actual teaching no.

Y: did it make you think back of your way of teaching, in any way?

B: Yes, in the sense that he did show me those videocassettes, then I had a chance to view them and I could pick up some of the areas where I could improve. Yes, in a way I could say it helped me, because usually you will never have a chance to evaluate yourself, you just go to class teach and think what might have gone wrong, but if you could see it, then it is somehow different, you can pick exactly that this is where I should not have done this, I should have done better this way.

Y: Is that part big?

B: No, I could say that most of them were confirmations of what I already knew about myself. Then they were now confirmed that really this area you need to improve, of which some of them you can not change, they are part of who you are. I could say, on a scale of 1 to 10 I could say it 1 or 10%.

Y: small?

B: yes, very small.

Stevens's view was slightly different.

Y: what were the things that you expected to learn?

S: well, the research itself, how it is conducted, that is what I was to learn, also the line of questioning, and what can I gain out of these types of questions, what the person is actually looking at. In Sehlola's case, it was fortunately for me, education. That is my field, so there were some questions that I actually gain some knowledge in the process, I learned something...

Y: what about ways to improve your teaching, or the classroom practices?

S: some of the questions were in that line, like I said, I learned a lot also how to present a lesson, I learned a lot from the questions, and it did help me in teaching. In our final year, when you study to be a teacher, we learn a lot on how to present lessons, how to write out a lesson and so on, Sehlola's questions are addition to what I learned at university, but it was in the back of my mind, I never actually realised it, so in that way, it helped me a lot.

...

Y: so I am right to say that in both ways, teaching and doing research, you learned quite a lot?

S: I learned quite a lot. Like I said, I learned both ways, not actually to say learned completely how to do research, but I learned how research is been done, and also those questions, like he did in many times, came and observed lessons, recorded those lessons, and afterwards we would reflect on those lessons, and then in some instances, he would ask me, whether there is any other ways that I could presented it for that specific topic, it makes me think a little bit, it broadens a person's mind, gives you other alternatives. (emphasis added).

What is significant here was the fact that, although Stevens did agree that participation had contributed to his own learning, both in terms of conducting research and teaching, his first response to my question on benefits and also the part highlighted above, seemed to imply that the benefit of the research aspect was more important to him than the teaching aspect.



When I informed Sehlola about the participants' response in respect of their perceived knowledge gain his responded as follows:

I wouldn't be too worried about himself (Billana) feeling that way, that I did not really help him improving his practice, because that was not the intention from the start. The way that I tried to improve their practice was, it was very accidental. It was not an explicit aim of mine, partly because that was not my main research question, and partly because I wanted them also to do the things as they have done, without feeling that they need to play up to my expectations, and that is why I did not specify that this is the kind of lessons that I want them to do, this is the topic I want to cover, I wanted the didactical processes to proceed itself. So I think my intentional efforts and incidental efforts act one thing to them to be *more reflective about their practice*. It was just that, it was not a major concern of mine. Although I hoped and I do think that they definitely were in a sense a little bit more reflective about what is happening in the class. *I can't see after all these questions that somebody asks you about why you do certain things and why you don't do the other things, and then say that there is no effect on me (emphasis added).*

Since Sehlola seemed to be so emphatic about his claim in respect of his participants' knowledge gain – at least they became more reflective about their teaching practice (as the emphasis in the quote above suggests), I specifically raised this issue again with Billana. “(Did his questions make you more reflective in terms of your way of teaching?) Not really. Watching the video playing back helped somehow for me to look at what I have done and what might be wrong, because usually you do not usually get such opportunities to look back. But that was through my own watching the video, not really from his questions. Actually, he [Sehlola] wanted me to behave as naturally as possible.”

Although Sehlola had pointed out that benefit in terms of his participants' knowledge gain could have been a by-product of his research, his response seemed to suggest that he saw it as an important motive for their participation. In the light of this, I posed this question to his participants. Billana's answer was:

Sehlola did explain to me the nature of his research, what is it all about and I realised that I could help in that regard. And also because he insisted that I should help him, much as I told him that I have a workload, I have many things to do, he insisted that 'Billana please help me'. Because he wanted someone who is experienced in teaching science at this specific type of school, and who is a black person. There are very few black people who are teaching sciences at that kind of school, usually they are teaching other subjects, like languages, then I felt sorry for the guy... He came to the school and said to the principal that he needed a science teacher who can help him in doing the research. Then the principal said Billana can help you, then he approached me, then I found no reason not helping him. (So you agreed because one he insisted, secondly that you think you could help?) Exactly, exactly, yes.

As Sehlola felt that he used the teachers' time after hours and that participation requested had been long and intensive, he had offered a monetary incentive to show his appreciation. According to Billana, this offer of the monetary incentives could “also have been a motivator in a way”.



According to Stevens,

When Sehlola approached me, he in fact recognised me from somewhere, that we actually met at the university, at the time that we were still in undergraduate, and he reminded me about that. Since we are both from the same place, then we started to talk. It wasn't actually a problem for me to participate, but he said that we met before and I thought well, why not give it a try?... Just the fact that I know him, even if it is somebody else, I was still going to participate because to me, it is really something new. And I thought to myself, I might gain, I might learn something in the process, so Sehlola was not the actual reason

His other responses continued to reveal his confusion about whether or not his knowing Sehlola had been the reason for his participation:

In Sehlola's case, I would [participate even if there is no benefit] because he is a fiend, he is my friend, and even if it was not based on education itself, I would still going to help him in a sense, as a friend, I was going to help him.

Reason is just that, like I said, I am quite eager, in fact maybe I should say quite curious, see how certain things are done. Like I said, how research is actually done...because this is my moral duty, to help, to assist ...just feel that it is my moral duty. Whenever it comes to education itself, I feel actually obliged to assist whatever way I can, to put it frankly...like I said, as long as it would not interfere with my own job and if time permits, I would be willing to assist.

As far as the responsibility of the researcher towards the participants is concerned, Sehlola's main concern was that "I have the responsibility that the information that they gave me, the revelation they make, is confidential, that is the main thing." Besides confidentiality he also thought that "they expected from me, as well, that I was not going to paint a bad picture of them, the teachers unable to practise the policy...I think they are also expecting that I will not be unreasonable of the after-hours and interview sessions, in terms of time, duration and so on, expecting some sense of balance, of comprehension of their own context, that I will not be unreasonable."

As for Stevens he extended his rationale about his moral duty to participate in research to stating that he did not think that researchers have any responsibility towards participants, "only that I won't expect you to show up here at any time, say well let's do it now. Just to inform me beforehand, that's probably the only responsibility that I can think of". Billana also thought that "if it [the responsibility] was there, it would be 30 out of 100". When I probed what kind of responsibility he meant he joked, "I think the only responsibility that he [Sehlola] had towards me was to make sure that he gets as much as possible from me. But in terms of other things, I don't think so."



I also followed up the issue of confidentiality with both participants. Stevens labelled it as ‘did not matter’, although he thought that Sehlola had “preferred to cover my identity.” For Billana, who had been promoted to the department, “at the time, that was not very much important, but if it is now, I will say yes...because I realise now that there is much at stake. There were a lot of things that I said to him which did not matter at that time, but now with the position that I am in and with the ambition that I have, I think it is important that whatever is reported about me should only be positive. But then, I was given both, good and bad.” When I probed, “so if you were still a teacher, had not had your position changed, would it be different?” he answered, “It would not be important.”

As for the responsibility of the participants towards the researcher, Sehlola’s understanding was mainly that “since they have agreed...I think they had their responsibility and they understood it very well that they had to make some contribution on a weekly basis, sometimes on a daily basis, open the classrooms to me, and open their minds to me, in terms of how they think about things, make themselves available when I make requests, those are the responsibilities. I must add that another responsibility that they had, I tried to make it clear to them that they had to be honest in their responses to my questions, not try to cover up or try to show only the good part.”

Stevens’ main concern echoed that of Sehlola, “because I committed myself to assist him, let’s say if we make an appointment, I should be available at that specific time, that is my responsibility.” Billana did not think that he had any responsibility towards the researcher and commented, “I think our relationship was just for the convenience for that moment”.

5.3.2 Researcher–practitioner relationship

The difficulty in securing participants had been one of the salient reflections in Sehlola’s dissertation. Initially, his design had been to “employ purposive sampling to identify three articulate Grade 9 teachers in the Pretoria East district, particularly ones who were familiar with the traditional curriculum and the two versions of C2005...Ideally, these teachers were to be active, dynamic and expressive, affording me easy and intelligible access to their deepest thoughts and decision-making processes” (2004, pp. 57-58). However,



Teachers were not really queuing up to have their classroom practices and particularly their grasp of Outcome based education (OBE) scrutinised and exposed for all to see...With the departmental letter of approval in hand, I knocked on the doors of countless schools, marketing the value of the research, its highly confidential nature and my sincere intentions, but had little success...Two teachers agreed to serve as respondents, but when I tried to finalise the details of the project with them, a few days before the schools closed for the December recess, they withdrew...In many schools I did not even get past the principal's office (the secretary's office, in some cases) to speak to teachers personally, for they deftly and persuasively cited their teachers' struggles with the new curricular demands and a host of other administrative overloads. Numerous letters to different principals, requesting teacher participation, went unanswered. One principal unreservedly told me that he did not think that any principal in his immediate area would sanction this kind of intrusion into his school and into their 'poor' teachers' classrooms. (2004, pp. 58-59, extracted)

Looking back Sehlola noted that the principals were "very protective of the teachers... don't want to expose themselves to that kind of scrutiny". Meanwhile, Billana referred to the principal as a familiar source whom he trusted, and went on to state that he preferred a researcher to go through the principal rather than to approach him directly, or "even if you come to me directly, we still need to go back to the principal".

Sehlola's struggle with securing participants continued even after the gatekeepers had granted him permission.

(A few principals) were extremely receptive and benevolent to my cause, and agreed that I could use their school as a base, provided that their Grade 9 natural science teachers were willing to participate. Unfortunately, not many of them were. The overriding response from the Grade 9 educators themselves was something akin to 'I'm not ready for this, sorry' or 'I have too much on my plate, maybe next year!' Four teachers initially committed themselves to opening themselves and their classroom for this inquiry, but withdrew a few weeks later. Two of them said that after due consideration of the full extent of their duties in this research, they would not be able to cope with this 'extra work load', while the other one cited the fact that he wanted to apply for the vacant HOD post at his school later on in the year, and felt an investigation into his classroom practices might jeopardise his chances (2004, p. 59).

Finally, Sehlola "managed to secure three respondents. One of these respondents was very willing; especially after he had discovered that we were from the same town and had been acquaintances at university [Stevens]. The other two were initially somewhat reluctant, but, with the right mix of cajoling and incentives [refer to the monetary compensation that he offered] finally relented]" (2004, p. 59).

Initially, Sehlola had also planned for a continuous and unbroken year-long engagement with each of the participants, however, this materialised for one of them only – Stevens. Billana was doing his first year part-time MBA study at the time and asked to be excused during the second term. Sehlola stated, "So this



one teacher [Billana], he was willing to help, but I understand that he needs to do his MBA and there will be times that he can't make it, and I am willing to take that risk, so I said yes, let's go for it."

According to Sehlola, there had been talks before the data collection. "I made it quite clear to them that this is going to be tiring, I will be sitting in your classroom, we are going to have after-hour interviews, sometimes it is going to be late into the night, so they were quite clear about that." As a result, Stevens had fairly realistic expectations of what Sehlola wanted from him. Stevens also felt "it [informing about the requirement of the research] important or me, because like I said, we are overloaded teachers and most of the time we are busy... so we need to make proper arrangements".

As far as the relationship during the data collection was concerned, Sehlola described it as research based, although, with Stevens, it was more of a mixture of fieldship and friendship.

For me, it was primarily, primarily just theoretical or field relationship, subject related. This is our common purpose. And I didn't want to get too involved with their personal affairs. For the two, it wasn't a problem, the other two. For this one that I know beforehand [Stevens], it was a little different because he would come to my house and eat, I invited his wife over as well, I will be at his house and his wife would be there. (So this is more like friendship?) Yes, more like friendship. I think this kind of friendship still continues, we still phone, I still phone to see how he is doing, so this is a bit different relationship...it comes from other connections, not just from the research. It was only after he agreed that I realised that I know this guy, and then we picked up our relationship. I hadn't seen him for 12, 13 years, we are from same town, he still goes there now and then, we knew the schools that he was talking about, or we could talk about the town in general. And it was a bit stronger relationship than the other two because of this previous relationship that we had.

Stevens clearly echoed Sehlola's perception:

It was, at times research-based, like we will just be doing the job, to get job done, other times we would communicate on a friendly basis, so it was the mixture of the two, but most of the time I was quite relaxed and I could speak openly... sometimes if I go to his house, we would have a cup of tea, have something to eat, after that we go to his study and we start with the questions.

And this was what he preferred as well.

Y: so, you were mentioning that actually your relationship was partly friendship and partly research based. So do you think this way is better or you prefer it to be just research based or you prefer it to be more friendship?

S: to me, the two should go together, I would be nervous, anyone could be nervous, if here is the person coming, I see a serious expression on the face. I don't actually know this person, what this person is up to and what could be the next question, so there should be a time for us to get to know each other a bit better on a personal level and not actually, like just maybe having a cup of tea, talking about life in general, that's what I mean by personal.

Y: a bit informal?



S: informal yes, instead of just a person coming here and staring at me, that would make it intense. Fortunately between the two of us, it was quite relaxed, we would also separating the two, right now it's time to drink tea, next step we start asking questions and focus on that.

Y: so, you think this kind of mixture is the best for you?

S: yes.

Y: And also in terms of formal and informal, you want it to be mixed?

S: yes, if possible. Although I wouldn't mind if the relationship shifts more to research, that's not a problem to me, as long as a person makes me feel relaxed during the interview.

Y: so this informal or the friendliness should at least exist?

S: To a lesser extent than the research.

Y: But it needs to be there?

S: It needs to be there, yes

Y: Otherwise you would feel?

S: less comfortable, and also intimidated, and also curious. I will ask myself what is the next step, and what will happen to this information that I give to this person, so there should be that relaxed atmosphere and also a feedback.

Y: that is important to you?

S: yes.

Billana thought that, at the time of the research, it was a mixture of research-based and friendship, for example, he and Sehlola would go out and drink sometimes, although as regards the friendship element "I would say it did not get much of that". However, he thought that the friendship or the bond was "important, because after doing a research with a person, you should not feel that you were just an object, you should not feel that you were used, you should feel that I contributed towards a human being, who maybe today has developed or today he is a Doctor. That makes you feel important, but if you do a research with a person that just disappears, you don't know what you did was of value or not." So although he "could not say that [I am disappointed that the relationship did not develop further] because my expectations in that regard was not so high, and I could not say that I am disappointed if there is not that relationship, if I myself were to do a research, I would keep the relationship a bit more friendlike."

He went on to substantiate:

(Am I right to say that it would be better if he could have kept it a bit more friend-like?) Yes, especially regarding the manner in which our research was conducted. If the research was conducted at school level and it ended there, it's fine. But it was conducted at home level, we would go out together for a drink somewhere, then it was in a way developing in more than just research. But if it was just kept professional from the beginning, I think there would have been no expectations from me.

So would he prefer this type of mixture or would he have wanted to keep it totally professional? To answer



this question, he highlighted again the importance of clarifying expectations.

B: if you would have kept it professional and then I would be justifying the reason why the relationship just end, but if you keep it somehow social, then you must have the responsibility there after.

Y: so it is like to make the expectation clear?

B: yes. Right at the beginning. This is how it is going to be, and when it ends, it ends.

Y: so if it is like that, you think that is also fine?

B: I think it is fine, in that sense that you don't create unnecessary expectations. If the expectation is that it is professional based, then when it finishes there, it finishes. The only problem came when the expectation is not made clear.

He thought that Sehlola' study, maybe because the fieldwork had been long and intensively interactive, "created a bit more expectations than he actually gave." This slight disappointment had been intensified when Sehlola had not given him a copy of the dissertation as promised.

B: That's where I got angry with him; he knows that even today, he never brought anything back to me. And I don't have any idea what did he say about me.

Y: did he report you badly? (joking)

B: exactly (laugh). That is where I think he just missed it.

Y: He didn't give you anything?

B: No, not the final product.

Y: Not anything in the progress even?

B: He just reported to me verbally, that he was able to do the thesis and then he submitted it, then he got his Doctorate.

Y: But not the contents of the thesis?

B: No the contents, he didn't give me the contents, but he promised, he kept promising that "I will send you the contents".

Y: and you think it is important to do that?

B: It is very important, it is very important. Because after all you have taken something from me, that is part of me, then you should not exclusively own it, even though you have the intellectual property or intellectual right. It is very important that I have a copy of what you have written, whether you have misrepresented what I have said, or you have said exactly how I said it.²⁹

Stevens had been given the transcript after the data collection, had read it halfway, and had not wanted to make any changes. "After he gave me the transcript, we never really. There was actually no contact, to put it that way. But he did mention to me that I have done a good job and he was quite happy with that, there was that feedback, the information or the interview itself was seen as positive... he did contact me and he also mentioned that the professor was quite impressed about some of my answers I gave him, and I was quite happy about that I could make that contribution. In that way he contacted me and he gave me a feedback on

²⁹ Sehlola claimed that "the transcripts I showed to participants on a regular basis, and then also the final document, the final thesis yes, and I am almost sure that I also given Billana a copy. And Billana is the one who is asking for it...I showed them the analysis, not the full thesis... I think I showed the full one to the friend of mine [Stevens], not to the other one [Billana]."



the research in general.”

On a personal level, Sehlola stated that “with the one [Stevens] there was quite a lot of interactions since then, been to his school, he phoned me and I phoned him, I got some files from him about the support material that they were working with. It was just what friends do, phoning how you are doing or he phoning me to ask whether I was busy. And he said that he had this article and would like me to read through it...he would phone one day and say my mother is here, do you want to talk to her. The other two, Billana, I had not had much contact with him since the end of the research.”

N: after I had finished with his last interview? I can't remember. I was under the impression that I have given him the copy. But in terms of contact him for a cup of tea or anything, no I actually doubt whether we did that.

Y: and so for the other one whom you didn't write, you also didn't contact him?

N: I think I was with him at his school, probably once after that, but never again, it wasn't real follow up friendship or relationship after that. Yes, I did made contact with him after that, I explained to him the trend of the thesis, the shape of the thesis, and that I am not going to use him, for comparison with other two teachers. Because of the repeativeness of the data, I am not going to include him.

Y: so, may I right to say that in general, after the interviews are finished, basically there were not much contact?

N: not much contact, particularly with Billana. I have been to his school, left my number there and said let's communicate, but he never got back to me again. So I am not sure whether he is willing or eager to take the relationship further, although I would see that it probably is my responsibility.

In a slightly joking tone Billana revealed that, “I think our relationship was just for the convenience for that moment [during the research], but thereafter when I was going to marry I invited him, he didn't come, to show that he has no responsibility towards me. Sometimes once in a blue moon he would phone and say Billana how are you, but there is nothing that is keeping two of us together.”

Y: You mentioned that sometimes he would phone you after the data collection was finished?

B: The contact was only me phoning him, and then he would phone back. It wasn't so good, he would only phone when there is something that he needs.

Y: so when you phone him, it is like what? Is it more like just to say hello or it is also something that you want to say to him?

B: Basically it was just to say how are you doing. In fact I was just phoning to find out how he is coping, because by then he was new in town, just to find out how this place was treating him.

Y: how many times did he contact you, do you remember?

B: I think after research, after he had completed that research till now (refer to 2003-2006), he might have called me two or three times, not many.

Y: so you are also a bit disappointed, on this point?

B: yes, I would just say that, but generally I don't let myself to be disappointed because I don't expect much from people sometimes. You know, people are fallible, they are made from flesh and blood, they have weaknesses, now and then. It is important to keep your expectations minimum, when you deal with human beings (laugh).

Y: It sounds very sad.



B: Yes.

The post research relationship with Stevens was, as Sehlola himself also acknowledged, quite different.

(Did he also just contact you for to say hello, how are you?) Yes, yes, in fact, we were invited to a restaurant. He invited us, me and my wife there for supper. And that was his thank you gesture. And I appreciated it. I didn't really expect him to do that, but he felt that he wanted to say thank you in that way. And he also invited us to dinner church service, so it wasn't that I am finished with you and goodbye, he followed up.

Sehlola proposed the following possible reasons to explain this difference

N: I think one of the reasons why there is more with Stevens is because my wife is teaching at the same school as him, so I used to go there and I would see him. He would phone me and ask my wife and I and his wife and him to a lunch or supper after that, so there was much close interaction between us.

Y: between the family?

N: yes. I will probably have to say that the retreat in my case was not seriously attended to. I did not pay sufficient attention to the does and don't of retreating, in terms of what you do with the participants after you finish with them. And mine for Stevens was better and more emotionally, I would say, much more comforting retrieval, than for Billana. Why not so with Billana, I am no sure.

Y: you were mentioning that you think they were not expecting you to go back to them, was that kind of expectation made clear from the beginning?

N: yes, I don't think that there was an expectation that this is going to be a long-term relationship. There was not going to be a next-year follow up kind of interaction.

Y: so, in a way there was only field-ship and after it is finished, it is finished?

N: yes, technically speaking. Look, I paid these participants for their participation. I was thinking why I had a less satisfying relationship with Billana in terms of retreat. I think one of the reasons, I am not quite sure about this, though one of the reasons was that I knew that Billana was very busy, he was busy with the MBA, and he was getting married later on. A few weeks or a few months after that, I got an invitation from him which I couldn't oblige to. And the other factor is that he left the school.

Y: shortly afterwards?

N: it was a few months after our fieldship, that he left he school and joined the department on the district level. I am not sure if those factors contribute to the fact. I know that I was at his school about twice in that period, looking for him. I think it shows that it was not intended, if I have to now make excuses for myself, there wasn't an attempt because I know once or twice I got to the school when he was still there, and he was busy in the class and I left my details to say that I was here and just to say hi, then there was a second time that I was there, then I heard that he has left for somewhere else.

Y: he said that he called you sometimes?

N: he called me yes, he called once in December, I am not sure whether that was 2004 or 2003, that is the time he told me that he was with the department. Yes, I admittedly that there was much better retreats or withdraw with Stevens.

Was formal closure preferred by these two participants and by the researcher? Or did they want to have a degree of continuity? According to Sehlola:

Y: do you think that it is necessary to make contact after the research is finished?

N: I think it is a decent thing to do (laugh). I think it is the right thing to do. You know, to show the people that now



the academic stuff is finished, I still got interest in you, I have certain bonds with you.

Y: to what extent?

N: at phonic level for me is fine. Just to say how things are going at school, how are you coping now at work, how is your wife doing. I think it is important to do that, it is just that I haven't done that kind of follow up, I think it is important. I think it will help teachers generally to be more responsive to research, to see that researcher is not just interested in their little domain. Once they finished with you, they have no further interest or concern about you.

Y: what about the feasibility of doing that?

N: I think it is quite feasible. Just pick up the phone and say, how are you doing?

Y: on the other hand, from their side, do you think they may expect or they may want to have this kind of relationship afterwards?

N: I am not sure. I am not sure, that they will think less of me that I haven't done it. I don't think I created in them the expectation that this is going to be a life-long enterprise relationship, that kind of expectation. I also don't think they would expect me to come back to them, let's go for lunch or things like that, I don't think there is that kind of expectation, I just think that this is the proper and nice thing to do, the follow-ups, in terms of common decency.

Y: but is it still going to die out eventually?

N: I think it depends a lot on the kind of bonds that you had with the participants. I think with the other two, I think it would be a downward curve from here. For the one friend of mine, it could probably be much more flat out relationship.

Stevens, although he had appreciated Sehlola invitation to dinner as a token of his appreciation, had not expected any continuity, "to me it doesn't really matter, if the researcher feels it is finished and is done with me, fine... the person is not under any obligation to contact me afterwards." Billana, on the other hand, thought that both closure and continuity were important.

B: I think closure is fine, it is a closed book now.

Y: is it important for you to have a closure?

B: Yes, it is important because you become part of the research, that research becomes one of your activities. Like myself, usually, if I do a project I want to know where it ends, whether good or bad, but I must know the project was successful or not successful because of the following reason, therefore it is important.

Y: How important is it to continue the relationship or the conversation in any way?

B: According to me it is very important because it gives a researcher a chance to know the participant in more than one way, because if I am participating in your research, I participate as a person and you don't know who I am, you won't have the perspective on some of the answers that I am giving you. I think it is important that there should be that relationship that you will be able to put some of the things that I say into perspective.

He even expanded on this statement to indicate that friendship always comes into play in research because "before you became a participant in a research, I am first a human being, I am first a person, that should not be taken out of the research itself, you should not see a participant as an object from which you get information, you should consider other factors, like those personal aspects."

Looking back on his relationship with Stevens, Sehlola provided more details about the possible influence of the friendship on this research study.



(Do you think friendship is necessary in a research?) No, I don't think it is necessary. I think I had good data, some of the quality data from the other two as well. It does not affect the data at all, it just eased the availability of the participants (refer to Stevens), easier to get to him, easier to phone him and said how things are going and can we get together tomorrow, but not really in terms of the quality of the data. In terms of what he said, I think whether he wasn't a friend of mine, he will still do the same... the fact I was friend with one participant, not so friend with the others, in terms of close emotional relationship, does not affect the level that we are engaged... I think it depends lots on the attitude and approach of the researcher, and I think that I have the communication style and interview style that let people feel comfortable. During the session I can feel that we are talking friendly, not intimidating. I think for me, that was important. Whether it is the friend of mine, or whether for the other two, which was just more theoretic thing or more official research agreement, I think that really did not influence the quality and nature of the responses that I got, the data I got. I think the fact that I was friend of one just made the communication in terms of making appointment, in terms of getting better access, it was just better with him, because we had this emotional thing...in a research, the field-ship is sufficient to let everything go on... but I must point out, I think it depends a lot on the way the researcher approaches, and his ability to make the participant to feel safe. I don't think all the researchers had got that natural ability to let people feel comfortable, that this is not an exercise, not something authority, that I am the one that has expert knowledge, that you are the one should learn from me. I think it takes certain tactic, it takes certain personality (laugh) to understand that."

Yet, as much as he revelled in the above quote that friendship had not influenced his data he was still opposed to the notion of friendship in research.

I think the risk of friendship is that you stand the risk of losing some of the objectivity... I think that one can lose some objectivity in how you interpret the data, if you get too emotional tied up with your participants. I think there must be some level of distance, look at my friend, we got this emotional connection, but I think we shouldn't get too much involved.

Detecting a contradiction, I followed up again on this topic in my second interview with him.

N: I think generally speaking, that if you are too close to your participants, you know the possibility does exist that you are not honest as researcher about things, that data analysis, interpretation that could put the participants or your friends in a suspicious or bad light. You might be intended to hide or to manipulate or to ignore incidents that illustrate things which are not encouraging or not complementing the participant, or you might be tempted to enlarge, to eliminate only those things that complement.

Y: but you said that it didn't happen in your case?

N: no, I would say no. Because I wasn't too close, I was close but not too close. If you read the thesis, and I must be honest with you, I don't think that I painted a better picture of him.

Y: but why you think some people might do it?

N: that's human nature.

Y: why?

N: I think the stakes aren't so high then for you to do that. I think ones' chances of been honest and sincere about the data is much more positive, without that emotional content with your participant.

...

N: I think for me it is better not to be too friendly with the participants. But with that I would also add that the researcher and the ability of the researcher, you need to be honest with yourself, that this friendship is not going to in any way change my line of questioning or change my lens of understanding what the participant is doing or thinking. If the person can to do that self analysis (looking a bit tired) and find themselves to be a person of sound conscious



and objectivity, and if the researcher can make that explicit in her write up, I wouldn't completely converse to that. So mine is not a definite all encompassing no to a close friendship between the participant and the researcher, I reiterate and I think for me generally it is better that it is not.

Y: is it safer?

N: it is safer, for me it makes more sense, the tendency or the probability of more valid and reliable data is greater. But I am sure that there is scope and opportunity for researchers who are able to be honest and forthright to do that, with close friends. I think the main thing is for you to make this friendship with the participants clear in your write-up.

I also asked Stevens whether the friendship with Sehlola had influenced his responses, and he stated that he would not have given a different answer had Sehlola not been his friend.

5.3.3 Evaluation of the relationship

Despite some dissatisfaction and hiccups all three rated the researcher–practitioner relationship as positive.

I think it went quite well...if you talk about tension, no, I never had such tensions and experiences. So I think it was quite a good experience for both participants... you knew exactly what the dynamics are in school and what kind of the problems you will encounter with the school teachers, that they were not always going to be available, sometimes I have made appointments with them, and the soccer competition is coming up, or at the end of the month I need to cash my cheque, that sort of things. It was expected. So yes it did happen, but that was overshadowed completely by the substantive contribution that they made, by the expressiveness, by the responsiveness to the questions, to the interviews, by the willingness to be interviewed, the willingness to be observed in the class, even the times when it didn't go well with the lessons. So that was completely overwhelmed by the few times that Stevens was not available or Billana couldn't make it when I planed to meet them there. So, yes there were hiccups, but that was expected, and they did not detract from the quality of data... They lived up to my expectations in the sense of their commitment to the process, in the sense of their contribution to the data. In that sense, yes they lived up to my expectations...I think I was realistic, and they meet those realistic expectations. (Sehlola)

(So how do you in general find him as a researcher)? He is quite enthusiastic, he impressed me at times, he would, like I heard from his wife that he would wake up or just pick the phone at 9 pm and say I am going to Stevens. In that way he quite lived himself into this research and that is something I learned about Sehlola. I would sometimes look at him and say this guy is really eager, he enjoys what he is doing, and that I really learned something from him. He is really serious about this research. And he enjoyed himself, he lived himself into it, that is something I learned form him. (In way he also inspired you?) Yes, very much, very much. Like I said, I learned something about him that I never knew. (Stevens)

I think then the relationship was good, even now I would still regard it to be not bad, because if I call him, then he is still the same Sehlola that I knew then. Only that now it is a bit distant now, the frequency is no more there... As a researcher I would say that he was passionate, and then he did his homework. He knew what he wanted out of you and he made sure that he milk you as much as possible (laugh). My impression of him as a researcher, I think he is good, because he will be able to keep his appointments, and then if he can not make it, he will phone and say I can not make it. And that's what you need. (Billana)



5.4 *Synthesis*

5.4.1 A brief summary of the cases

5.4.1.1 Francis

Francis claimed that theory contribution was the motive behind conducting the research for her dissertation, yet her interview had revealed that she had never considered publication. She claimed in the dissertation that practical consideration was as an indirect and secondary contribution, but her interview had revealed that this was indeed her main motivation for doing the research.

Francis suspected that interest in the research topic could have motivated her participants to participate. Both of her participants agreed that they had been interested in her topic, however there were indications that helping the researcher had been a stronger factor in their motivation. Both participants claimed that they had not anticipated any benefit from participation, although, in retrospect, the way in which the research had been conducted and the experiences shared in the focus group could certainly count as a practical benefit.

Francis's major concerns regarding her responsibility towards the participants was confidentiality and providing feedback. Whilst providing feedback was also appreciated by both participants, they regarded issues other than confidentiality as more important, for instance, accuracy in portraying them and an acknowledgment of their contribution. It was also interesting that Francis's own understanding of confidentiality was characterised by "I do not think that they would have minded", "I never asked them", and "for the sake of me feeling ok about it", in other words, she focused more on satisfying her own understanding of professionalism rather than on respect for the preferences of her participants.

As for the responsibility of the participants towards the researcher, the researcher highlighted openness and honesty on the part of the participants; while both participants pointed to practical issues, such as being available and adhering to the commitment.

These two participants had not known the researcher personally prior to the study, and they expressed appreciation of Francis's effort to contact them beforehand, to provide relevant information about the study and to share her expectations of the participants. Francis described her involvement in the data collection as



limited, and attributed this low level of involvement to the method used in her study (focus group) and her understanding of bias. Consequently, the researcher-participant relationship in this research was described by both the researcher and her participants as merely research based. According to all three, although friendliness in the process was important, friendship itself was not necessary and could instead constitute a danger.

Francis sent out themes she had identified from the focus group discussion to her participants after the data had been collected, and this was highly appreciated by her participants. She herself, on the other hand, also showed great appreciation of the way in which the participants had taken time to comment on the themes.

In terms of closure or continuity, Francis herself, as the researcher, preferred closure for this study. One of her participants revealed a similar preference, citing reasons of a busy schedule and motivation of participation had been mainly to help the researcher. The other participant expressed a preference for both closure (the project had achieved its aim) and continuity (continuous provision of updates on the research etc).

5.4.1.2 Thabo & De Beer

Thabo's initial involvement in De Beer's study had been to assist her. However, during the process, he had become interested in the different ways in which the participants had reacted to both he and De Beer and had decided to use the same participants and the same data in order to pursue his own research. He claimed that his topic was methodologically sensitive, and for this reason, he had not disclosed the intention of his research to the participants, even after the data collection was completed.

It was not only the intertwined nature of the two studies in this case, but also Thabo's many contradictions that made this case interesting. As the key question guiding his study had been the way in which sensitive cultural background could influence interviewing data and he had also clearly recognised that the participants should be "given the same status (as the researchers) as they both influence the data being generated (2004, p. 50)," my initial expectation had been that he would be sensitive to the researcher-practitioner relationship. Yet throughout his interview, despite his claims about the efforts he had made to go the extra mile for the participants, I could not find any concrete proof of this. He also repeatedly emphasised that it was De Beer, and not him, who was the face of the research, therefore she carried the



greater responsibility in the research. In fact, using the words of one participant, he basically disappeared after data collection. His stated reason that his study was methodologically sensitive did not provide an explanation for why he had never disclosed his research intentions to the participants, even after the data collection had been completed. In addition, he had also not acknowledged any of the participants in his acknowledgments (explained in more detail in Chapter 7).

De Beer had always had a dual aim – to contribute to theory and also to provide practical benefit to her participants. Interestingly, however, although she highlighted her practical concern repeatedly in her interview, besides asking what she could do for the participants at the end of the interviews, she stated that “change them or try to let them improve is not very specifically my intention. It just happened in some instances.” Thabo’s research topic implied that his study was the theory-contribution-only type. However he also claimed in his interview that researchers in theory-only type research should still try to provide some practical benefit.

De Beer speculated on several possibilities as to why her participants had participated – including interest in the topic and that it was inherent in the nature of teachers to help. Thabo suggested that, in one particular instance, the reason for participation could have been that the participant had expected some benefit and that help would be provided by the researchers – this was confirmed by that particular practitioner. Two participants expressed that benefit to the children was their most important motivation for participation, whilst helping the researcher was also mentioned as incentives to participate.

Two participants had not expected any personal benefit from their participation, while the other expressed a strong anticipation of receiving constructive feedback for his own growth purposes. In retrospect, one participant pointed to the enlightenment effect of the research, while the other two stated that if the research result were shared (which had not happened by the time of my interviews with them), benefits might accrue.

De Beer’s main concern regarding her responsibility towards the participants was that of confidentiality at the basic level and an acknowledgment of the value of participation at a higher level. Thabo was of the opinion that De Beer had more responsibility than he did in this research because of their different roles in the research. Therefore for him the major concern was more on the practical side, mainly, in respect of



keeping appointments. One participant regarded feedback as the primary responsibility of a researcher, while the other two listed respect from the researcher as a priority.

As regards the issue of confidentiality, two participants were not of the opinion that confidentiality mattered unless the research topic was personal; whilst the other participant expressed his preference for concealing his identity in the research report, quoting as his reasons the circumstance prevailing in the education system. All three manifested a similar understanding of the responsibility of the participant towards the researcher, namely, honesty and availability.

De Beer had not known any of the participants prior to the data collection; however, she had not experienced either deliberate blocking on the part of the principals nor strong resistance from the teachers.

The dual aim which De Beer had recognised resulted in the dual role that she experienced – as a researcher and a psychologist. She revealed that detachment had been more prominent in her observations, and involvement in her interviews. For fear of influencing the data, she had provided her participants with feedback or suggestions about a possible way forward only after the data had been collected.

She had noticed that experienced teachers were usually not concerned about her presence in their classrooms, while it was the less experienced teachers who would often come to her and ask for her opinions about the class and for advice. In such cases she had provided only positive feedbacks – reassuring them of what they were doing right. Inquiries to all three of her participants, on the other hand, revealed that such a strategy might have been somewhat extreme since all three actually stated that they did not mind criticism, so long as it was delivered with a positive attitude and in a constructive way.

De Beer classified the researcher–practitioner relationship in her study as research based with a mixture of formal and informal elements, as did Thabo. The participants had also viewed the process as friendly research based research combining both formal and informal elements. All the participants expressed their preference for the element of friendliness to be present in the way in which the researchers engaged with them.

Both De Beer and Thabo opposed the involvement of friendship for fear that friendship could jeopardise the data, while the participants expressed the opinion that friendship could either enhance spontaneity with the



result that expression could be freer or it could indeed result in more comprehensive responses.

After data collection, De Beer and Thabo held a session specifically to thank the participants – a gesture which was greatly appreciated by the participants. Together with gifts De Beer also gave her contact details to the participants so that, if they so wished, they could request the research findings. However, although two participants whom I interviewed expressed their interest in the findings, they had never initiated the process of asking for them.

De Beer had contacted one of the three participants several times after the data collection (although not the other two) and expressed her concern that continuing a relationship with all the participants would not be feasible. Thabo's view was that research was a contract and that the contract ended when the research finished. Two of the participants also expressed their preference for closure, echoing their preference for a research-based relationship, while the third participant would have preferred more continuity, particularly on a personal level.

I did not specifically bring up the issue of research with a hidden agenda to the participants, although I did attempt a general exploration of their perceptions of this issue. One participant did not mind, while the other two, one because "me as a adult needs to be provided with full information" and the other more out of his strong preference of transparency, opposed the suggestion that a hidden agenda might be the only way in which certain research could proceed.

5.4.1.3 Sehlola

Sehlola stated unequivocally his aim of theory-contribution only. This, according to him, had resulted not only from the influence from his supervisor and his own personal ambition to advance knowledge, but also from a practical consideration that he did not wish to complicate further the already complicated situations his participants faced by trying to change them or to improve their teaching practice.

Interestingly however, although he did not aim for improvement or change, he was of the opinion that his participants had learned something, particular in terms of their teaching practice, from their participation, and he regarded this expectation of learning as the most likely motivation for their participation. One participant acknowledged this knowledge gain, while both participants pointed more to learning in terms of



the way in which to conduct research, and not to teaching per se. The real motive for their participation, according to one of the participants, was both to help the researcher as a friend and because of his moral obligation to assist any educational research; while, for the other participant, his main motivation was to help the researcher.

Sehlola's main concern regarding his responsibility towards his participants was that of confidentiality, whilst, on the other hand, both of his participants did not think that the researchers had any responsibility towards them. When I probed the importance of the issue of confidentiality with his participants, one regarded it as necessary, specifically because he had been promoted and his image (particularly the negative aspect) needed to be protected; but otherwise, he did not feel it would have mattered. Similarly, the other participant would not have minded had his identity been revealed. The researcher's main concern about the responsibilities of the participants was the fulfilment of their commitment to the research and honesty, whilst the issue of practical commitment only was echoed by the participants.

The difficulty he had experienced in securing participants was one of the salient reflections in Sehlola's dissertation and in his interviews. Interestingly, his perception of the role of the principal role to protect his teachers by blocking the access of researcher was interpreted by one of the participant as the way in a trusted agency guarded them from *harm*.

Sehlola regarded their researcher–practitioner relationship as primarily research-based. However, because of the long term engagement nature of his study, friendship seemed inevitable. This, combined with the fact that certain research activities had taken place in the participants' homes, seemed to have further created the necessity to extend the research-based relationship to include a greater element of friendship, and it appear that Sehlola had not met the expectations which had been created.

After the data collection a degree of interaction between Sehlola and his friend had taken place, mostly as a family bond; while, in the case of the participant who had not been a friend of his, few contacts were reported. Sehlola thought that it would have been appropriate to continue the relationship after data collection, although he himself had not attended to this retreat issue seriously. Interestingly also was the fact that, although there had been continuity with his friend, his friend had not expect this, while the non-friend had expressed a preference for some continuity, but this had not happened.



5.4.2 Similarities and dissonances between the cases

All three authors claimed in their dissertations that theory contribution had been the main aim of their research, yet, as the interviews had revealed, in some cases this had been accurate (Thabo and Sehlola), while in other cases it had not been accurate (Francis). All researchers had also shown a strikingly similarity in terms of their understanding of confidentiality as their main responsibility towards their participants and also in terms of their opposition to the involvement of friendship in research.

However, of the three cases, Sehlola was the only researcher to have experienced negative gate keeping and a lack of interest on the part of the teachers in participating. While Francis might have benefited from her connections with her participants (not personally, but through the involvement of her supervisor in the project), it is surprising that De Beer had followed the normal accessing channels, and had not had any negative experiences in terms of accessing.

Sehlola was also the only researcher who had had a prior relationship with one of his participants. Although this relationship had been discovered accidentally, the difference between his relationship with this participant and with the other participant with whom he had not had a prior acquaintance manifested in many of the interesting ways in which the researcher-participant relationship developed and was perceived.

The researcher–practitioner relationship during data collections was similar in all the cases, with both formal and informal elements often exhibiting in the course of the research. A friendly research based relationship resulted and was preferred by both the researchers and the participants.

Retreat from the field did not seem to be attended to very seriously in all cases, as most relationships simply ended when data collection had finished. Feedbacks and an expression of thanks took place in some instances.

5.4.3 Similarities and dissonances between the researchers and the practitioners

To summarise of the similarities between the researchers and their participants:

- Providing feedback was recognised by certain researchers as their responsibility (Francis, De Beer), while the reactions from their respective participants in respect of feedback also suggested that they

also regarded this issue as both necessary and important;

- The views of the researchers and their participants on the responsibility of the participants towards the researcher seemed to be similar – either about honesty and openness or a realisation of the commitment to the research (be available, be on time etc);
- Almost all the researchers and their participants had regarded their relationship during the course of the research as friendly research-based, often both formal and informal; and most of them also indicated their preference for such relationship;
- Most of the researchers and their participants expressed their preference for closure after the research finished, while continuity was preferred mainly in the sense of providing feedback;
- Despite some dissatisfaction or suggestions of ways in which the research process could have been improved, all researchers and their participants viewed the researcher-participant relationship they had experienced in a positive light.

On the other hand, there is also clearly some dissonance between these two groups, including the following:

- Most of the researchers suspected that the motivation for participation was due to the interest of the participants in the research topic (Francis, De Beer) or expected benefits (in terms of knowledge gain in Sehlola's case or other practical benefit as in Thabo's case). While it would appear that both these had played a role, the notion of *help the researcher* dominated the reasons stated by the participants as to why they had participated. Also significant was the fact that, probably because the participants had perceived their participation as helping the researcher, they had often not expected personal benefits.
- Confidentiality was highlighted by most researchers as a fundamental responsibility of a researcher towards his/her participants; yet, with few exceptions, the majority of the participants had not regarded the concealing of identity as necessary;
- With the exception of De Beer no other researchers had mentioned acknowledgement or providing credibility to the participants as their responsibility; while, for the participants, many regarded it as, at least, as something pleasant, while others pointed to it as important;
- All the researchers regarded the role of friendship in a research situation as negative, mainly out of concern for bias; yet most participants (excluding those who were researchers themselves) thought otherwise.

5.4.4 Difference between the written text and oral relevance

The data from the interviews showed that conclusions reached solely on the basis of written accounts could be limited and, sometimes, even misleading because text is written with a certain audience in mind. In the



case of the dissertation, the expectation is that the audience will consist of supervisors and other academics, hence the purpose of conducting research was often said to be a contribution to theory, complying with the normal academic discourse. However, this process could sometimes lead to a loss of true intentions.

For example, in her dissertation Francis claimed that the main intention of her study was to contribute to the body of knowledge and she had cited the practical contribution as an indirect motivation, yet her interviews had revealed that practical concern was actually “that for me was really big enough” and, in fact, she had never thought about publishing – an essential element of theory contribution. Even her practical concern did not involve a contribution to the improvement of the practical situation, but indeed towards the development of a Masters course. Likewise, although Thabo’s topic and the writing in his dissertation both suggested a moderate level of sensitivity to the researcher–practitioner relationship, his interviews conveyed a totally different impression. Sehlola’s lack of attention to the issue of retreat from the field, particularly in the case of the participant with whom he had not had a prior acquaintance, also did not accord well with his relatively high level of sensitivity to the researcher–practitioner relationship.

The inclusion of interview data to supplement the written text also showed that what was revealed in the interviews could often provide more vivid and detailed information which would not always have been found/understood in the written document. Francis’s case is a good illustration of this as her case had been classified in category I mainly because of the limited information revealed in her dissertation. Yet her own understanding as revealed in the interview was that the method she had used (focus group) had been the main reason for her limited engagement. This would not have come into light in a review of her dissertation only.

5.4.5 Tackle the other puzzles

Did the limited description of the researcher–practitioner relationship and self-reflection result from the researchers’ limited understanding or from a deliberate choice to leave such description out due to their peripheral role to the study? The latter certainly would have contributed to the limited descriptions, yet the contradictions detected in the perceptions of the researchers, such as De Beer’s high level of concern for practical benefit, and yet “change them or try to let them improve is not very specifically my intention. It just happened in some instances”, or the contradictions detected between the researcher’s perception and



actions, as in Sehlola' case because, despite his words "it is decent to continue the relationship after fieldwork", he did not appear to have paid serious attention to the issue, could suggest that the understanding of the researcher–practitioner relationship was indeed limited.

Yet what remained puzzling is the fact that, if academics were expected to make up the audience for the dissertation, why were descriptions and reflections about the researcher–practitioner relationship, which would seem more relevant for this type of audience than for any other type, often not paid serious attention. Furthermore, why did the call for qualitative study to be more transparent, and the presentation of more relevant details of what the researcher did and why he/she had chosen to act in that particular way, not seem to exert any influence on the novice researchers who had specifically followed the qualitative paradigm.

Why did all those researchers who had showed a relatively deep understanding of the researcher–practitioner relationship (category III) aim their dissertations at the advancement of knowledge only; while those who had claimed the dual aims of research did not manifest much understanding? Based on Sehlola' understanding I would like to propose the following explanations:

- The influence of their supervisors could be one reason;
- If one bears in mind that all the category III studies were PhD studies and that the majority of PhD students wish to advance further in academia, one could reasonably expect the stronger presence of the academic discourse (in terms of the emphasis on theory contribution, new knowledge, etc); while, at Masters' level, the influence of the academic discourse may be less powerful. In addition, since many of the Masters students were also teachers themselves, the focus on a practical topic from the standpoint of their own situations, could also explain their specific attention to this practical dimension of research.

5.5 Chapter summary

This chapter provides a detail description of three student-researcher cases from the perspectives of both the original researchers and their original participants.

The main aim of providing this detailed description, sometimes resulting in long quotes, was not only to allow the data speak for itself³⁰, but also to provide a record of what had been said, what the reactions had

³⁰ My own role (my own voice) there was more of a presenter who made sure that the transition from one piece to another was smooth.

been, what the follow ups were and how conclusions had been drawn.

The chapter then provided an analysis in the form of a synthesis in order to explore the similarities and dissonances between the cases, between the researchers and the practitioners, as well as between the written text and the oral relevance of the written texts. Lastly, explanations for the other puzzles which had emerged in Chapter 4 were proposed.